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**THE IMPACT OF THE ACADEMY SCHOOLS
PROGRAMME ON THE SECONDARY EDUCATION OF
ONE COMMUNITY.**

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the Academy Schools Programme introduced by the Labour Government in 2000 as part of its drive to raise educational standards in English inner cities. It examines the philosophies of that programme and traces their roots of in the 19th Century philosophies, traditions and policies of the English education system. The study focuses on one community in the North of England and the post war history of education in that community culminating in the opening of an Academy school (Northtown Academy) in September 2006. It traces the development of Northtown Academy from an insider perspective between 2002 and 2006 and moves to an analysis of the Academy between 2006 and 2010 through a study of its policy documents and associated media reports. The study is unusual in that so far most research on the Academy Programme has focused on issues concerning such things as sponsorship, finance, exclusions and curriculum/faith concerns.

The historical aspect of the research is based on extensive reading of mainly secondary sources as well as government and local government publications. It looks at whose voices dominated in the development of the Academy Programme and whose voices went unheard. The transition to an Academy is examined in detail with a description of the internal voices of the school seeking to use the Academy process to regenerate a community. The research then traces the tensions between this agenda and the school improvement agenda of the sponsors of the new Academy. It describes the key players promoting the faith sponsorship of the school and contends that their voices are much less in the public domain than policy makers of the past.

The main conclusion of the thesis is that Northtown Academy was a missed opportunity to promote a dynamic, democratic model of community

regeneration and raises questions about the extent to which working class state education continues to be influenced by assumptions that have been inherited from the past.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Academy schools were first introduced in 2000 by David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education, as part of the Labour Government's strategy to raise the standards of education in English inner cities. They were established as State-maintained independent schools set up with the help of private sponsors. Originally called City Academies, the government dropped the word 'city' to allow the expansion of the programme into rural areas as well as inner cities. The schools had to raise £2m from private organisations such as business, faith or voluntary groups. The government committed to meeting the capital costs of the projects which always involved new buildings. The typical amount contributed by the taxpayer was £25m. In return for their investment, sponsors had influence over the design of the building, the ethos, the specialism and the curriculum.

This thesis examines the development of the Academy Schools Programme between 2000 and 2010 and traces the roots of the programme in the historical philosophies and policies of the English education system. It describes the development of one Academy in the north of England and the impact that the Academy had on its local community. It examines the leading players in the sponsorship of the Academy and the impact of the sponsor on the building, the specialism, the curriculum and, most importantly, on the ethos. It contends that the Academy's emphasis on controlling its students affected its inclusivity and led to a model which sought to 'gentle' the poor rather than preparing young people to be full members of a 21st Century democracy.

The questions it seeks to answer are:

- How did secondary education in the inner cities get to where it is today? What were the English educational traditions which influenced attitudes to the education of the working class? Are those influences still felt today? How much has changed and how much continues?
- What did the Labour Government which was elected in 1997 believe was the purpose of education when Tony Blair famously declared his priorities to be 'Education, education, education!'?
- What were the direct antecedents of the Academy programme? What were the assumptions about inner cities and inner city schools which drove the policy? Did Academies represent something radically different or more of the same?
- Who were the leading voices driving the Academies Programme? Who were the leading sponsors and what interests did they represent? Do those interests reinforce or challenge existing dominant interests in society?
- What was the impact on one Academy on its local community and what lessons can be learned from the in-depth study of the development and operation of that Academy?

I spent almost twenty five years working in an inner city school in a northern city, which I will refer to throughout as Northtown for the purposes of anonymity. The thesis analyses in detail the reasons why the existing comprehensive school sought Academy status in order to better serve the needs of its community. It includes an insider perspective, an analysis of the policy documents of the school and the local authority, transcripts of school meetings and media coverage of the processes. All documents referring to Northtown are in the public domain or were made available to me by Northtown Comprehensive School who supported my early research.

The thesis essentially provides a case study of one community's experience of post war education and sets this case within the historical context of the philosophies and policies of the English educational tradition. My approach in this historical section was to undertake extensive reading, mainly of

secondary source material but also of government policy documents and other official publications. The reading also included some primary sources from the 19th Century and 20th Century which illuminated public policy with insights of the predominant philosophies of key voices of the time. For example, in Hannah More's 'The Delegate' we see illustrated the views of the emerging paternalistic, Christian, middle classes. This study seeks to examine how such views resonate in the public statements surrounding the development of Academy schools.

My approach to the case study contains within it separate strands, moving from an insider participant perspective to research of documents in the public domain. A case study approach was appropriate to the subject of this thesis as it provides an opportunity to study the Academy Schools Programme in greater depth within a limited environment and time scale. Case study has been described as an umbrella term for a family of research methods having in common the decisions to focus enquiry around an instance'. (Adelman et al 1977 p139.) Case study is more than story telling or a description of events; rather it is concerned with the interaction of factors and events. Its strength is to allow the researcher to concentrate on the specific situation and to identify the specific processes at work. The case study section of this thesis puts flesh on the bones of a piece of policy analysis and brings alive that policy in terms of real life people and situations. However the caveat, as with all case studies, is the extent to which the findings of the case study can be generalised. A successful case study should provide an illuminatory, three dimensional picture whilst remaining mindful of the generalisation and relatability to similar settings. (Bassey 1981). A successful case study can inform, illuminate and provide a basis for the discussion of policy on a single institution and in this thesis it is used to investigate the Academy Schools Programme in microcosm.

The section of the case study which traces the development of Northtown Academy from 2002-2006 uses participant observation from an insider perspective. The research began with my decision in 2005 to pursue doctoral study and I approached the head teacher, the governors and the LEA for permission to research the planning of the Northtown Academy from 2002-5 and to research the processes between 2005 and the first year of the

new academy. I had no preconceived ideas of what I would be observing but had access to governors' reports and full permission to take verbatim notes at meetings which were not of a confidential nature e.g. public meetings, staff meetings. The sponsor and new academy principle also gave permission for my research from February 2006 when they took over the planning of the Academy and April 2007 when I left the Academy. However for the purpose of this thesis I have only used the public policy documents of the sponsors and academy as I became increasingly concerned at the changing focus of the inclusion debate in the school and did not want to rely on my subjective notes. This was an attempt to minimise the criticism levelled against participant observation that it can be subjective, impressionistic and biased. Participant observers need to be aware of the danger of bias and I felt that this was particularly true once the Academy was open and began to operate. For this reason the case study shifts at this point to an analysis of policy documents and other documents in the public domain, including Ofsted reports and news coverage, rather than my own notes and experiences. The case study undertaken did not happen in a vacuum and I have chosen to focus on those aspects of the Academy's development which could be contextualised in terms of the historical and political setting in which it is rooted. However I accept that bias exists in every piece of research from the moment that the research question is set and this is acknowledged from the outset of this research which studies an area in which I have personal experience and interest. As Carr contends:

'Partisanship is an essential ingredient in educational research whose elimination could only be achieved by eliminating the entire research enterprise itself.' (Carr 2000 p139).

In order to reflect on my own positionality in relation to this thesis I have examined what is important in affecting my role as a researcher since as Wellington asserts 'being reflexive is important but does not merit an excessively long, confessional, autobiographic account.' (Wellington 2000 p42).

I am a fifty five year old woman who has worked as a teacher in inner city schools for the last thirty years in the area of special educational needs and

disabilities. I was born in a mining village in the north of England into a second generation Irish Catholic family who believed that education was the passport to life's future journeys. My parents were both educated in the English elementary school system and left school at 14, my father to be a miner and my mother to work in a laundry. I passed my eleven plus and won a scholarship to a direct grant convent school in a city twelve miles away from my home. The cultures of my home and school were very different and I had to learn to conform to the norms of those separate worlds. My father died at the age of fifty when I was fifteen, his health broken by a life down the pit. We were left extremely poor, but when I received good grades in my GCE exams my mother was insistent that I should continue my studies rather than take the job that I was offered in the local bank. I passed my A levels but turned down my places at several universities because on my visits to them I had felt like an outsider. I accepted a place at a local polytechnic because the Professor of Politics there was an ex miner and made me feel welcome and valued on my visit. On completing my degree in 1979 I was accepted onto an MA course at Sheffield University but the grants for such courses were discontinued by the newly elected Conservative Government and I was unable to continue my studies. After a number of temporary jobs I trained as a teacher and went to work in an inner city comprehensive school in the same city where I was educated. I spent the next twenty five years there working as a teacher, then as the Special educational Needs Coordinator and eventually as Assistant Headteacher.

I have always believed passionately that the educational grading, labelling and classifying of students has led to the vast majority of the children that I have taught being labelled as 'failures' when they are anything but. I agree with McCulloch when he states that 'There has been a consistent tendency for the failures in the system to be in the main working class children' (McCulloch 1998 p1).

However, I also believe that schools, and individuals within schools, can and do make a difference to students feeling of self worth. It was because of a collective holding of this belief amongst the staff of Northtown Comprehensive School that we sought academy status. We wanted to create something radically different in partnership with our community and the roots

of this research lay in that vision. But in 2005 the nature of the research began to change as I became increasingly concerned by the new vision for inclusion being expressed by the newly appointed leadership team. I left the Academy in April 2007 and took up a teaching post in a nearby school. I took the decision to continue with my research but with a different focus, moving from an insider perspective to an evaluation of the progress of the Academy through an analysis of information in the public domain. Despite my abrupt departure from the Academy I still hoped to see our vision become a reality which our community richly deserved. This was a difficult period in my research and I had to examine the issue of bias preventing the research from being of value. It has taken the several years of writing this thesis to separate the emotions of leaving the school from my educational research. I have attempted to be as objective as possible whilst accepting subjectivity as 'a garment that cannot be removed'

(Peshkin 1988 p177)

It is the intent of this thesis to use the case study approach to describe in detail the Academy Programme in one community but it is not its intent to criticise a particular sponsor or parent trust. For this reason the city is referred to as Northtown and the schools as Northtown Comprehensive and Northtown Academy. In places Northtown Academy is referred to as the Academy to signify that it is a particular reference to the case study Academy rather than academies in general. The sponsor is never referred to by name and other key players are referred to only by initials. The Christian Trust which sponsors the Academy is referred to throughout as the Parent Trust.

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The thesis examines the roots of the City Academy Programme in the City Technology Colleges initiatives of the 1979-97 Conservative Governments and in the US experiments with Charter Schools. However it also looks at the political soil in which those roots were planted and which also influenced its growth. It contends that the Academy Schools Programme does not represent a radical new approach to inner city education but rather is bedded in the soil of ongoing fears about inner city unrest and the need to 'gentle' the

poor. It harks back to notions of 'golden ages' with 'gold standard' education dominated by the influence of the English public school tradition and later by the grammar schools with their shared emphasis on ethos, discipline, uniform, houses and good sportsmanship. In the Academies these philosophies were combined with New Labour themes of privatisation, a workforce educated to face global challenges, vocationalism and the central role that faith sponsors could play in inner city education. Northtown Academy is sponsored by a religious charity which is broadly Church of England but represents a coalition of faiths. It is situated in an area which was economically devastated by the collapse of its twin industrial bases of coal and steel under the 1979-1997 Conservative Governments. The case study examines the social and economic circumstances of the local community of the school which drove the school to seek Academy status. It examines the circumstances that led to a change of leadership, buildings and plans for the curriculum under the influence of that sponsor and looks at the voices which dominated and those which were disregarded.

The conclusions of this thesis aim to look at what lessons can be learned from the experiences of one inner city community and the value of continuing to dissent from the culturally dominant voices still driving privatisation and demonization of existing inner city schools.

The thesis is organised as follows.

Chapter 2 explores the 19th and 20th century historical context within which state provided secondary education in England originated and developed. It seeks to show why the history of education policy is important and relevant to an analysis of the Academy Schools Programme and how historically bequeathed educational and political ideologies have shaped thinking about the role of Academy schools.

Chapter 3 examines the educational policies and philosophies of the Labour Government which was elected in 1997. It identifies the trends which dominated the thinking of the Conservative Governments which preceded it

and identifies which of those trends were espoused by New Labour and influenced the development of the Academy Schools Programme.

Chapter 4 analyses the development of the Academy Schools Programme and its immediate roots in the market driven educational agenda of the Labour Government. It explores the links between the 'standards' and 'underachievement' debate and the subsequent conclusion that low expectations in inner city schools were themselves to blame for the social exclusion of the communities they served.

Chapters 5 and 6 use case study analysis to describe in detail the development of an academy in the north of England. Chapter 5 looks at the economic and political history which led to the school being declared as 'failing' and traces the planning of a new academy which could provide a radical alternative. Chapter 6 extends the study by focussing on the impact of the sponsor and its associated donor on the subsequent development of the school.

Chapter 7 concludes by setting the Academy Programme within its ancestry in the philosophies and traditions which have dominated English education since the nineteenth century. It contends that the lesson to be learned from the development of the Academy Schools Programme is that radical developments in education require political and social change to precipitate them. Without such changes the Academy Schools Programme was always destined to be more of the same rather than something different.

CHAPTER 2 - THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the chapter is to place the policy to establish Academy schools within a historical context in order to show how this policy reflects some of the ideological assumptions about what education is and what it is for, that have dominated the education tradition in England since the early 19th Century. By ideology I mean those ideas which dominated the development of secondary schooling for all and whose interests those ideas served. 'History clarifies how education is related to wider social, economic and political conditions and contexts' (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p700) The aim is to show how the English educational tradition has been used in the Academy programme to promote a particular view of the 'good society', or in this case the 'good school'. The term 'English education tradition' refers to those methods which were chosen to order, integrate and control education by 'differentiated rituals' (Bernstein 1971 p160). These fall into different categories:

- (1) **Age differentiated** – in the English system reinforcing social class as the basic unit of social organisation.
- (2) **Age related rituals** – in the English tradition a group of rituals grouped around the prefect system as a system of social control which strengthens commitment to dominant values.
- (3) **Gender related rituals** – in English tradition celebrating conceptions of the 'masculine' around sporting prowess and 'gentlemanly' conduct.
- (4) **House rituals** – the rituals which 'delineate fictional communities within the school'. In the English system the imagery of uniform, plaques, scrolls and songs.

'The social purpose of the school becomes one of educating for diversity in social and economic function' (Bernstein 1971 p160). In 19th Century England this was inextricably linked to the dominant view that individuals

were by nature unequal and needed education appropriate to their preordained place in society. The history and deep-rooted nature of such rituals can be traced in the language of the development of the Academy Schools Programme and the Academies themselves in relation to the importance of a strong ethos of duty and hard work, the return to the traditional blazer uniforms, the reintroduction of house systems and sixth forms (but within the latter a strong emphasis on vocational education and economic citizenship). Historical research is an important means of understanding and addressing concerns about the current state of secondary state education in English inner cities. It illuminates the structures and taken for granted assumptions by showing how they have developed and whose social, economic and political interests they served, and continue to serve. Our current notions of school and education are historical creations that come into being for cultural reasons. The history of secondary schooling in England illuminates our understanding of the present and exposes the limitations and inadequacies of the current policies in the inner cities.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENGLISH EDUCATION TRADITION

Education 1780-1830

From the late 18th Century social change was continuous and persuasive. From the 1780s towns began to grow, most rapidly around the factories of Lancashire, the Midlands and the West Riding, and commercial centres and ports like London and Liverpool. Although England was still predominantly rural, a growing population and the spread of towns without planning, local government, churches or schools gave rise to a sense of uncertainty and precariousness in the social structures.

Whilst not attempting to over simplify or generalise, pre-industrialisation was a period of more gradual change in rural and small urban communities where schooling and literacy served the precisely defined ends of the social order and where any education for the poor(er) was in small institutions controlled by the Church. By contrast the rapid change and population rise of the

industrial revolution disrupted settled ways of life, led to new social and political tensions and saw a decline in the authority of the Church. This saw the beginnings of a new debate about the purpose and provision of education as an element of social policy. New educational ideas emerged from the political radicalism of the 1790s, utilitarianism and laissez faire economics, the Evangelical Movement in the Church of England and the educational radicalism associated with the ideas of Rousseau (Lawson and Silver 1973). Before this it was believed by the aristocracy that the education of the lower classes was unnecessary and even undesirable since they did not need to be educated in order to fulfil their role in the social and economic order. A view put forcefully by James Booth as late as 1858 when he asserted that a poor man who sought to improve himself through education was 'a disaffected person, who was not satisfied with the station in which God had placed him, but, forgetting the humility that belonged to his condition, was contriving to raise himself out of his proper place.' (Booth 1858 p7).

However, the population explosion had created vast slums and living conditions in which crime and mob rule could flourish. The protagonists of educational reform believed that threats to the existing social structures and the danger of subversive ideas could best be resisted by providing working class children with a form of education which reconciled them to their purpose in life, taught them to respect their betters and made them less likely to engage in civil disturbance or crime – a form of education directly aimed at 'gentling the masses' (Carr and Hartnett 1996). Strands of this thinking can be traced in the current panic about the crisis of youth in the inner cities and the need for schools to reassert discipline, control, and values in response to the 'threat' posed by the 'hoodie culture' of 21st Century inner city youth..

2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF THE VICTORIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

Other social changes affected demand for the traditional English education designed for gentlemen of leisure. The 19th Century saw a rising professional and commercial middle class aspiring to obtain a prestige education to gain the status of gentlemen and this gave rise to the Victorian

public school. This is often associated with the reputation of Thomas Arnold and Rugby School (Lawson and Silver 1973, McCulloch 1998, Roach 1986). Arnold was concerned that a man's education should have two equally important aspects, the professional and the liberal. The professional was to fit him for his daily work and the liberal to fit him for citizenship (Arnold 1845). In this context 'liberal' was linked to the use of liberal education based on the study of the classics – Greek, Latin and Mathematics – which were considered to have a unique value in training the mind. Public schools like Eton, Winchester and Rugby grew in size and influence helped by the coming of the railways which helped to concentrate boys into a small number of larger boarding schools.

The Clarendon Report of 1864 reported on the nine leading public schools and claimed that public schools have 'the largest share in moulding the character of the English gentleman. The processes which formed this character included religion (that is, Christianity), the classics and their canonical texts . . . prefects and those team games which 'fostered individual skills . . . and loyalty to one's house and school'. Under this conception of education the central goal was not the development of intellect but of good character.' (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p76). Such ideas came to be shared by leading figures in the English establishment, such as Hadow, Spens and Norwood who would later construct the framework of secondary state schooling.

The impact of the Taunton Commission 1864-8

The Taunton Commission reported on those schools not covered by the Clarendon Report and the Newcastle Report into Elementary Schools. It proposed three categories or grades of endowed schools:

- **Grade 1** would concentrate on classical studies 'for the sons of men with considerable incomes independent of their own exertions' and professional or businessmen 'whose profits put them on the same level'.

- **Grade 2** would be up to the age of 16 and would follow a modern 'curriculum based on Maths, Science and Modern Languages'. It would be a broader, general education for 'tradesmen, shopkeepers and all who live by trade'.
- **Grade 3** would be up to the age of 14 and would cover basic literacy and numeracy. It would be 'for a class distinctly lower in the scale' such as smaller tradesmen, tenant farmers and 'superior artisans' (Taunton Report 1868 p587).

In this hierarchical system, the differing provisions amounted to a system based explicitly on social class gradations in which schools of the first grade constituted the 'defining institutions of the emerging system of secondary education, that is, those that schools which sought elite status must seek to emulate and indeed to imitate.' (McCulloch 1998 p12).

The report was critical of the lack of trained teachers and the weak pedagogy in the majority of private schools and grammar schools and it proposed greater state control and supervision of secondary schools and exams. The Endowed Schools Act of 1869 promoted the three tier system proposed by Taunton which limited access to any secondary education for working class pupils. Under the same Act public schools were freed from all government controls and moved 'beyond the democratic process' (Simon 1965 p107).

19th Century schooling for all – laissez faire and 'gentling the masses'

'Unconsciously at first and later, perhaps, with deliberate intent, the architects of the English education system proceeded to construct it along the lines of the Platonic model described in 'The Republic'. The children of gold, silver and iron were given the education deemed appropriate to their supposed abilities and the state's requirements' (Bishop 1971 p276).

The laissez faire economics of Adam Smith and the utilitarianism of the political philosophy of Jeremy Bentham constrained the educational development of the education of the working class in 19th Century England.

The utilitarian view of society is of a collection of individuals, each pursuing their own interests and desires in order to maximise their pursuit of happiness. State intervention in education undermined self reliance and the moral responsibility of parents to educate their children. The contribution of schooling to the common good was calculated in terms of its economic usefulness. Therefore any educational provision from public funding should reflect value for money, ie should be cheap. By such views state provision of education for the masses was seen as an affront to individual liberty. Educational expansion was accomplished instead through the efforts of philanthropists and religious or voluntary societies who devised ways of expanding educational provision by economical ways of organising schools. Such 'interference' was justified since the doctrine of 'utility' included the importance of 'useful' knowledge.

The utilitarians were anxious to educate the different social classes for their different roles – the poor to work intelligently and the ruling classes to govern intelligently. The Church of England Evangelical Movement which grew up in the late 18th Century was in some ways a counterpart to utilitarianism but its objective was more to re-enforce traditional codes of behaviour and protect the social order by educating an illiterate population and to warn against social and moral dangers. They hoped to rescue the poor from moral corruption and the possible dangers of revolution by promoting traditional, Christian values. The evangelicals were anxious to preach to the poor the acceptance of their status in society and their main method of this preaching were the printing press and the Sunday school. (Lawson and Silver 1973).

The Sunday Schools Movement had been launched in the 1780s by Robert Raikes to teach children to read their bible and 'to train up the lower classes in habits of industry and piety' (Gregory 1881 p4) . Hannah More was one of the most famous authors of evangelical tracts and a supporter of the Sunday School Movement. The Movement rapidly became national with some factory owners opening schools at their factories. In 1819 Hannah More wrote a tract called 'The Delegate' with a central character called James Dawson who was the model working man 'skilful in his business, industrious

in his calling, sober in his habits and punctual in his engagements, laborious in earning his money and prudent in the use he makes of it' (More 1829 p7). Her moral exhortations were based on an assumption that the ills of society were caused by the individual characteristics of the working class and that social good would be achieved by removing individual ignorance, immorality and insubordination. Dawson's moral strength protected him from the clutches of a delegate from a revolutionary society and attracted the attention of a benevolent philanthropist who helped him to obtain work. As McCann explains, 'it exemplified the fundamentally counter revolutionary nature of the whole charitable and educational enterprise underlined in such pamphlets' (McCann 1997 p18).

The success of Sunday schools helped to prepare for the next phase of development – the monitorial schools. The two founders of the monitorial schools were Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster. Lancaster was a Quaker who opened a school for poor children in 1798, whilst Bell was a Church of England clergyman who had worked in education in India. In monitorial schools classes were conducted in one large school room where the master could scrutinise the whole school. Pupils were instructed in groups of 10-20 by monitors who gave lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic. The reading was from the Bible and other religious texts. The masters drilled the monitors who then drilled their groups in that work and oversaw general discipline and order. The whole process was regulated by a system of rewards and punishments which acted as a course in moral training. The schools aimed to discipline the poor in good habits, piety and orderly behaviour and were hailed as a piece of social engineering which was simple and inexpensive (Lawson and Silver 1973). In the 1830s and 1840s the system was adopted by elementary endowed schools and by grammar schools who sought to implement habits of obedience and work habits suited to a developing capitalist society. As Carr and Hartnett point out:

'with hindsight it was also laying the foundations for the mechanical methods, low standards and large classes that came to characterise large parts of English elementary education for the remainder of the 19th Century' (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p82).

Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth described the changes that took place in the first half of the 19th Century in Manchester and asserted that workers were no longer prepared to consider their poverty as inevitable but “rightly or wrongly attributed their suffering to political causes” and referred to the ‘prevalence of the restless desire for organic changes and for violent political measures’ (Kay-Shuttleworth 1862 p92). These districts of Manchester resembled many inner city areas in Lancashire and Yorkshire and around ports like London and Liverpool. By the 1830s the voluntary schools could not keep pace with the growing demand for elementary education and in 1833 the government voted the sum of £20,000 towards the cost of building schools ‘for the education of children of the poorer classes’ This gave rise to demands for accountability and in 1839 an Education Committee was established with James Kay-Shuttleworth as its Secretary. He sought to offer an education which would make the working classes aware that they were responsible for themselves rather than blaming political causes for their plight.

He denounced working class decadence and saw state schooling as a means to modify and control the changes brought about by industrialisation. He felt that the school should become a substitute for the parents of the poor who were characterised as apathetic and ignorant. As Carr and Hartnett assert:

‘One way of looking at the thoughts of Kay-Shuttleworth is as a system of social control, as part of the Victorian obsession with authority and power when dealing with the education of the poor’ (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p84).

From 1843 grants became available for furniture and apparatus as well as for school building. A new era of teacher training was brought about in 1846 with the inauguration of the pupil teacher scheme with monitors replaced by apprentices. The state sector and voluntary organisations were collaborating in a separate system designed explicitly for the children of the poor. As Lawson and Silver comment:

“What had begun as a rescue exercise for the children of the ‘lower orders’ or labouring classes’ had become consolidated into a separate system with a separate ideology . . . working class and middle class education in the 19th Century had clear identities. They were separated by different curricula, length of school life, attendance rates and cultural and social objectives’ (Lawson and Silver p270).

By 1860 the Education Department was one of the largest civil establishments and the administrative and economic challenges this raised led to the 1858 Royal Commission and its report, the 1861 Newcastle Report, which paid tribute to the work of Kay-Shuttleworth and which devised a revised code of payment by results. The aim of the code was that all working class children should be given a minimum elementary education as cheaply and effectively as possible and schools were judged on attendance rates and exam performance in the three Rs. It led to teaching by rote as it encouraged teachers to cram pupils with the facts needed to pass so that the school earned its grant. As Carr and Hartnett contend:

‘Its main purpose was to provide working class children with the minimum rudiments of instruction as cheaply as possible. Although it was condemned by most contemporary educationalists of the period, it nevertheless helped to establish an educational tradition – never completely eradicated – whose negative influence still permeates educational thinking about teaching, curriculum and assessment’ (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p87).

In 1864 another Royal Commission was established to inquire into schools not covered by the Newcastle Report (1861) on elementary schools or the Clarendon Report (1864) on public schools. Its hierarchical tripartite scheme was described earlier and adhered to the systematic separation of the social classes that was favoured by so many of its witnesses and emphasised the distinct nature of the different grades of schools. However its support for selection by competitive examinations at 13 for pupils from different social classes led to the possibility for a small minority to progress into secondary education. In the 1860s educational provision led to ‘a sharp separation between instruction for the working classes and education for the middle

classes. This kind of approach sanctioned a limited measure of secondary education for the working class but did not allow for a distinct form of secondary education that might be more appropriate for working class children' (McCulloch 1998 p17).

Such views failed to meet the needs, ambitions and hopes of many working class people and two responses to this emerged in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century:

1. The idea of 'ladders' for able children from working class backgrounds which gave prospects for selective secondary education. The advantage of this viewpoint was that it leaves the existing social order unscathed and indeed strengthens the hold of the middle classes by allowing it to recruit able working class pupils.
2. A distinct form of secondary education especially designed as suitable for working class children and moving towards a fit-for-purpose secondary education for all.

The Elementary Education Act of 1870 aimed to fill the gaps left by voluntary provision and led to the election of School Boards responsible for elementary education in their local area. By the 1890s there was a compulsory system of elementary education in which nearly all working class children went to school. Debate then increasingly revolved around how far the most able should progress into secondary education and whether School Boards should provide advanced as well as elementary instruction. In the 1880s and 1890s higher grade schools emerged in urban centres for able children. However these schools differed from secondary schools as they were aimed at children who would be compelled to leave school to go to work at the age of fourteen.

The Bryce Commission of 1895 exemplifies these two views amongst its witnesses. Some witnesses were clearly in favour of separation and selection. For example, Reverent Glazebrook of Clifton College

differentiated elementary school education that ‘trains a boy to accept and retain knowledge which is put into his mouth’ from secondary school education that ‘trains him to acquire knowledge for himself’. He dismissed the need for advanced education for the majority of the working class and did not wish to see ‘future errand boys wasting their time on the classical side of a grammar school’ (Bryce Commission p456). However, other witnesses differed from such views. As McCulloch points out, many such witnesses were even more conservative and limited in that they sought no change to existing distinctions of social class and instead supported a new form of class-based provision, but in another way they were ‘subversive’ by claiming that working class children could be suited to secondary education and also that the label could be appropriate to different kinds of curricula. An example of this is the evidence of John Paton of the National Home Reading Scheme who argued for an alternative form of secondary education for working class children which would “open to them some of those higher pleasures which like the light and air of heaven should be accessible to all men, whatever their mental faculty or their social station” (Bryce Commission Memorandum from Paton p3).

The Bryce Commission proposed a distinct form of secondary education for the working class. Higher grade elementary schools were recognised as a form of secondary school of the third grade whilst some, which educated their students in preparation for scholarships, were of the second grade. This inclusion within the Taunton categorisation posed questions about the nature of secondary education itself and overturned the familiar assumption that secondary education was by its very nature middle class. It legitimised the idea of a distinct working class form of secondary education with technical education included alongside classical and liberal studies (McCulloch 1998). The Education Act of 1902 closed off the alternative proposals of the Bryce Report. School Boards were abolished in favour of Local Education Authorities responsible for both elementary and secondary education. Higher grade elementary schools either reverted to elementary schools or became secondary schools under a new system of secondary education. The Act established a Board of Education with an administrative structure and Robert

Morant was appointed as one of its permanent secretaries. Morant believed in classical education with the public school as its prototype.

By defining board schools as purely elementary and bringing them in a relationship with the newly strengthened grammar schools, the Act defined a strict class relationship. Morant's view of secondary education was that it should replicate the educational values of the public school. The Regulations for Secondary Schools issued in 1904 laid down a minimum curriculum which preserved as much as possible of the traditional grammar school and public school spirit and presupposed that secondary education was designed with university requirements in mind. The free place system introduced in 1907 made grants available to schools taking more than a quarter of its children from elementary schools and gave a new structure and financial security to the schools. Sixth form work was patchy in many grammar schools until their numbers rose after the First World War. The method of selection for secondary schools varied enormously but gradually came to be based on mental testing in English, Arithmetic and Intelligence.

In 1904 Morant brought in Regulations for Secondary Schools to ensure that the development of secondary education remained traditional and exclusive. Higher grade elementary schools were retained in the new scheme but were not to aspire to become secondary in nature. Greater reliance was placed on the provision of scholarships for able working class children to transfer to the secondary sector. As Searle commented, "secondary education was restricted to fee paying children from the middle classes and a handful of exceptionally able pupils caught by the offer of free places or by a 'scholarship' ladder" (Searle 1971 p79). This view is supported by McCulloch "The class divide between secondary and elementary education was re-enforced to render the hopes of a distinct form of working class secondary education a derelict and abandoned ideal" (McCulloch 1998 p25).

Many of the local secondary schools of the 19th Century became state secondary schools and continued to imitate the practices and traditions of Victorian public schools and were encouraged by the Board of Education to

do so. Secondary schools remained selective, fee paying schools designed for a small proportion of the population with a curriculum which avoided any practical or vocational elements. Exams assumed an increasing influence as the basis for securing scholarships or free places. Thus secondary education in the early 20th Century was constituted along the lines of social class and preserved elite traditions whilst resisting the expansion of state secondary education to working class pupils “who would undermine its social and cultural characteristics” (McCulloch 1998 p29). The large majority of working class children remained confined to elementary schools that the President of the Board of Education, Lord Eustace Percy, described as “as much ‘finishing schools’ for manual workers as Miss Pinkerton’s academy was a finishing school for young ladies” (E Percy 1958 ‘Some Memories’ quoted in G McCulloch 1998 p29). A system which prepared my own father for a life down a coal mine just as it had prepared his father before him.

Secondary Education for all or Gold, Silver and Bronze?

By the 1920s the large growth in adult unemployment was being blamed by some on the lack of advanced vocational education for industrial workers and this was perceived to be responsible for national economic decline. Although the 1902 Education Act had led to the expansion of secondary education, that education was largely created in the image of the old public and grammar schools and ‘as a result secondary education continued to be based on a strong sense of social hierarchy and a widespread assumption that the masses lacked the abilities to benefit from it’ (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p95). By the 1920s this view was being contested by a growing view that a successful democracy and economy would be best served by a better educated population and demands for the end of the system of elementary and secondary education.

In 1922 a policy document entitled ‘Secondary Education for All’ was edited by RH Tawney for the Labour Party and asserted that the only proper definition of secondary education was ‘the education of the adolescent’, the phrase that was used as the title for the Hadow Report of 1926. Tawney was

also a member of the Committee which produced that report. The Committee was established to report into the organisation, objectives and curriculum for children in attendance at schools other than secondary schools. It argued that the type of schools with their roots in the 19th Century was not meeting the needs of the 20th Century. It argued that the new secondary schools had developed along the lines of the old endowed grammar schools and proposed a single system of primary and secondary schools with two types of secondary school, selective grammar schools and non-selective modern schools available to all. This challenged the whole assumption about the nature of secondary education and proposed a distinct form of working class education. However, it was also conservative in that its ideas about the purposes of education remained based on social class divisions (McCulloch 1998).

Political pressure for wider secondary education continued throughout the 1930s and led to a further inquiry into secondary education chaired by Will Spens to seek ways of 'securing equality of conditions in post-primary schools of different types'. Its report proposed that the term 'elementary' should be abolished and replaced by a tripartite system of grammar schools, modern schools and technical schools with a minimum school leaving age of the same general level in all schools. The report strongly endorsed parity of esteem between the different forms of post-primary education. However, this did not reflect the reality of social class differences in the 1930s or the extent to which traditional views in education would be prepared to surrender their status:

'The strength of the Platonic tradition in secondary education is perhaps best reflected not in those who resisted reform but those who advocated radical change. By the 1920s and 30s there were many critics who advocated a major expansion in the provision of secondary education. . . It is important to note that these reformers did not challenge the tripartite system and in many cases actively sought ways to incorporate it into a system of 'secondary education for all' (McCulloch 1998 p47).

Sir Cyril Norwood represented the vested interests of the traditionalists. He was Head of Harrow public school and Chairman of the Secondary Schools

Examinations Council and became President of St Johns, Oxford. He was an advocate of the ideology of education represented by public schools in the late 19th Century and the Platonic classifications which legitimised the maintenance of the views shaped by the cultural conditions of the late 19th Century. He was fervent in his defence of what he called 'The English tradition of education with its ideals of knighthood, chivalry and the English gentleman rooted in the Middle Ages but maintained by the public schools' (Norwood 1929). He insisted that these same ideals should be the basis of any expanded system of secondary education.

In 1941 a committee was set up to report on the organisation of a proposed expansion of secondary schooling. Sir Cyril Norwood was appointed Chair. In 1943 the Norwood Report was published. It proposed three types of schools to match the needs of three kinds of minds – academic, technical and practical. The schools were to be the grammar school for the academic, the technical school for the technical with an applied art and science curriculum and the secondary modern school with a practical curriculum for the pupil who 'deals more easily with concrete things' (Board of Education 1943 p213). The report suggested that children could be separated out at the age of eleven by measurable abilities, a suggestion which, as Tomlinson describes, "has cast a long and pernicious shadow over the education of less privileged groups throughout the 20th Century" (Tomlinson 2005 p16).

The 1944 Education Act produced by the wartime coalition government and implemented by the Labour Government in 1945 reorganised the education system into primary, secondary and further education and finally recognised the right to secondary education for all. Local Authorities were required to provide secondary schools which gave the opportunity for all pupils to develop their skills, aptitudes and abilities. The school leaving age was raised to fifteen and the Board of Education was replaced by a Ministry of Education which was given the power to develop a coherent, national education policy. Local Authorities were required to produce local plans to meet the needs of pupils in their area. At the end of 1945, Circular 73 was published which advised LEAs on how to produce such plans. The guidance

was along the lines of the Norwood Report and said that as a general rule the amount of accommodation which should be provided was 70/75% for modern schools and 25/30% for technical/grammar schools. Grammar schools continued to offer traditional academic education whilst technical schools were to develop pre-vocational schooling and modern schools were to develop post elementary schoolings of a practical nature. The Labour Party supported the tripartite system in the belief that selection procedures would be on the basis of 'ability' rather than class and would give working class pupils the opportunity to benefit from an academic grammar school curriculum. As Carr and Hartnett point out:

“It is an interesting illustration of the power of the English political and educational traditions that selective secondary schooling, which effectively excluded three quarters of all children from higher education, was a take-for-granted part of the mainstream of political life until the 1960s.(Carr and Hartnett 1996 p96).

Under the tripartite system grammar school children took examinations which acted as both leaving certificates and entry tickets for higher education. Modern children generally left school at 15 with no examination certificates.

Whose voices dominated and whose went unheeded?

As RH Tawney noted in the 1930s:

“English educational policy has been carried out in the main by men few, if any, of whom have attended the schools principally affected by it or would dream of allowing their children to attend them” (Tawney 1981 p144).

The voices which dominated educational thinking about educating the urban poor in the 19th Century were those whose dominant priority was education as a system of social control, typified by Kay-Shuttleworth's obsession with authority and power when dealing with the education of the poor. It was also the voices of the utilitarians which dominated as articulated in the writings of Jeremy Bentham with its stress on individualism and laissez faire economic doctrines leading to a view that 'any state funded education system should

be inferior to that provided privately by individuals and that it should be cheap' (Carr and Hartnett p87). At the turn of the 20th Century the voice of Robert Morant was a dominant one echoing the views of J.S. Mill and Matthew Arnold and believing that the existence of democracy depended upon 'voluntarily submitting the impulse of the many ignorant to the guidance and control of the few wise' (Lowe R 1976 Quoted in Carr and Hartnett 1996 p94).

This helped to lead to the dominance of the grammar school tradition (and the public school) for more than half of the 20th Century. Even in the 1940s with post war pressure for a more egalitarian approach to secondary education, it was the voices of Conservatives like Norwood who dominated leading to a tripartite system of education which formed a strong, underlying, cultural influence lasting to the present day. This is exemplified in the obsession with 'gold standard' A Level exams being seen as the passport to University entrance and an obsession with standards set against euphemisms about the average or less able child.

Yet at each stage in the development of education policy for the education of the urban poor, there were other voices striving to be heard. In "Science and Education", TA Huxley set out his vision of the role of education "the masses should be educated because they are men and women with unlimited capacities of being, doing and suffering" (Selleck 1968 p13). The Luddites and the Chartists launched a serious political and ideological counter attack and alternative political perspectives on the nature of education. They proposed that schools should teach really useful knowledge to enable working class children to escape the inequalities of the class system. Through radical pamphlets and books, for example those of Tom Paine, and through public meetings and radical organisations, a view of the power of education to change the social order was expressed.

In evidence to the 1895 Bryce Commission, whilst some witnesses remained in favour of separation between elementary and secondary education, with secondary education remaining fee paying and middle class in nature, other

witnesses asserted that a different kind of secondary curriculum and educational purpose might suit working class children. For example, Trades and Labour Councils expressed the view that the children of the working class should continue into secondary education at evening schools which could be two-tier depending on the child's abilities. Another view was that expressed by John Brown Paton of the National Home Reading Union who argued that 'a scheme of secondary education for the working classes should seek to combine social and recreative elements with the more practical and intellectual elements of education' (Paton 1895 p3). He argued that such education should be a combination of physical education, social and aesthetic education, vocational training and ethical teaching of citizenship and personal morality. Such views were not to dominate the report's findings and the subsequent development of education policy into the early 20th Century.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter posed the question "How did secondary education in the early 20th Century inner cities get to where it is today?" It examined the historical philosophies, traditions and policies of the 19th Century educational system and began to track through how those cultural ideologies still dominate educational policy today. Most of the foundations lay in the traditions of the public schools which were unapologetic about privilege seeing it rather as representing a badge of success. They sustained and fostered elites and encouraged competition in work and in sport. Grammar schools' ethos, timetable and shape were modelled on the nineteenth century public schools, organised in houses, patrolled by prefects and housed in panelled buildings resembling mini baronial homes. Grammar schools are still linked with notions of 'real', 'proper' education based on a fixed body of knowledge which is held by educated adults and passed on in measurable, standardised ways under strong authority and leadership in order to ensure a disciplined ethos. These are themes which resonate strongly in the development of rhetoric around the need to challenge inner city achievement through partnerships with public schools.

Mass education in the 19th Century was the subject of a great deal of discussion and interest. The dominant view was that working class education should be elementary rather than secondary in nature, and that secondary education should be intended explicitly and exclusively for the middle and upper classes with public schools like Eton and Winchester catering for the elite and representing the gold standard of education. Such social differentiation has remained a major feature of secondary education, underpinning the tripartite system of secondary education for most of the 20th Century. As McCulloch concludes:

“Division, hierarchy and social inequality have been basic continuities in educational provision . . . the society of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries generated deep seated conflicts and contradictions that surrounded the infiltrated secondary education throughout subsequent reforms and wider social change. The inherent tensions between secondary education for the working class and working class secondary education that originated in the 19th Century were evident throughout the 20th Century” (McCulloch 1998 p157/8).

During the 1990s this legacy became apparent in the development of policies designed by the Labour government to promote choice and diversity and to encourage voluntary and private provision of education for those in the inner cities through the City Academy Programme.

CHAPTER 3 – THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF NEW LABOUR 1997-2009

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to answer the question 'What did the Labour Government think is the value of purpose of education? It traces the roots of the Academy Schools policy in the dominant philosophies of the new Labour Government of 1997. It identifies the trends which had emerged under the previous Conservative governments and the way that many of these were espoused by the Labour government. It examines the continued rise of entrepreneurship and privatisation in education, the continuation of the 'standards' debate and league tables and focuses particularly on government policy pronouncements affecting inner city education and 'failing schools'.

It also focuses on the re-emergence of fears about inner city unrest and the need to maintain power and control which has obsessed education for the masses (Carr and Hartnett 1996). It contends that the Academy Schools programme has its foundations in the reassertion of predemocratic ideals which dominated the Conservative Governments of the 1980s and 1990s and continued under successive Labour Governments after 1997.

Comprehensive consensus?

The 1944 Education Act was based on tripartite educational notions that pupils should be separated at the age of 11 on the basis of 'scientific' IQ tests with most working class pupils leaving education at fifteen. The Conservative Government and Labour opposition in the early 1960s both realised that the economy needed more young people to be educated to higher levels. This coincided with views within the Labour Party that educating children together in their community without selection was an aim on egalitarian grounds. At the same time scientific theories of intelligence were being challenged.

The Labour Government elected in 1964 produced Circular 10/65 a year later, which made a request to LEAs to submit their plans for comprehensive reorganisation but there was no legal framework set for such reorganisation until the 1976 Education Act. Between 1965 and 1976 it was left to LEAs to develop their plans and there was wide variation in their responses (Ball 2008). There was gradual progression towards comprehensive education. In 1965, 9% of the population were educated in comprehensive schools. This had risen to 80% by 1977, but as economic conditions began to change in the early 1970s, the comprehensives provided a soft target for conservative critics who had already begun their attack with the release of the Black Papers in the late 1960s.

Grammar schools continued to coexist alongside comprehensives in many LEAs and a version of the grammar school curriculum was firmly established in most comprehensives (Ball 2006). Many Labour politicians in Harold Wilson's Government still expressed a personal belief in the grammar school as the best route of social mobility for bright working class pupils. The hegemony of the grammar school and the O Level curriculum was never challenged other than within a small handful of schools and the support for comprehensives from the Labour group was articulated in terms of a project to improve class access rather than any attempt to examine and reconstruct the ideological formal content of the education being offered.

Secondary Modern Schools were also still being defended. Ball (2008) quotes Quentin Hogg, a senior Conservative politician, speaking in the House of Commons about the benefits of Secondary Modern Schools who provided pupils with 'an education tailor-made to their desires, their bents and their requirements' (Hansard, January 1965). As Ball comments, these are a 'form of words which would not be out of place either in 1870 or 1944' (Ball 2008 p70).

1969-1977 Black Papers

The Black Papers were written between 1969 and 1977. They were attacks on egalitarian principles and were highly critical of post-war educational policy. They linked comprehensive reorganisation with a decline in education standards and an attack on academic excellence through a levelling down of such standards. The remedy would be a return to the traditions of streaming and selection and the English education tradition. They returned to the argument that the social class arrangements of English society reflected the fact that people were born with a hereditary level of intelligence which the education process could not affect and which simply reflect a society's own hierarchy (Carr and Hartnett 1996). They were also concerned about higher education and the political involvement of students in the student unrest of 1968. They saw the roots of that unrest lying in the lack of respect for, and challenge to, traditional authority.

The critiques contained both the defence of the elitist liberal curriculum and an attack on the destabilising effects of progressivism. In the Black Papers state education was portrayed as having descended into chaos and they contended that the solutions to this lay in a return to pre-comprehensive progressive forms and methods to prevent a perceived levelling down of standards. The Papers contained three themes:

1. Academic standards, especially literacy and numeracy, were in decline and this explained Britain's economic decline.
2. Dangerous, politically motivated teachers were preaching revolutionary socialism leading to a link between comprehensives and social disorder.
3. Ill discipline and a fall of standards and behaviour in the classrooms had spread to the street and a moral panic was being promulgated.

From 1945 onwards Britain had experienced a period of sustained economic growth, low unemployment and inflation. However, oil prices rose four-fold in 1973 and led to mass unemployment and unprecedented price inflation. Britain was a society in distress, rethinking its place in the world. One

response was to hark back to restating traditional approaches to economic, political and cultural life in the belief that this would result in a return to greatness rather than the introduction of radical alternatives. The economic theory of monetarism was seen as an antidote to Keynesian economics which were now seen by the Right as a cause of the economic decline. However, monetarism was a political as well as an economic doctrine. It aimed to place a reduction in public spending at the core of its agenda alongside the 'key role of the market' in economic growth.

Schooling acquired a conflicting significance since it was perceived to be a factor in the nation's decline but could also be utilised to reintroduce a respect for 'authority, discipline and morality; the defence of traditional academic values and qualities; and a general deference to the notions of nation, family and race' (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p129). It was to be part of defining Englishness and 'the enemy within.'

The ideal subject would be the holder and believer in traditional values and sober virtues as exemplified by Hannah More in the character of James Dawson of Spitalfields one hundred and sixty years earlier (More H. 1817). The antithesis of this is what Ball calls:

'the alternative subject: the carrier of alien values or alien culture, the agitator/trade unionist, sexual deviant or single parent mother, permissive/liberal and progressive teacher - in other words the 'enemy within' the traitor'. (Ball 2006 p27)

Again this resonates with the 'agitator', in the 'Delegate' urging Dawson towards moral and religious damnation with his calls to read the works of Paine and Cobbet undermining the aim that the poor man should be educated well enough to read only his bible. (More H 1817).

Important was the weakness of the political left in defending ideas of equality of opportunity, comprehensive schooling and progressive education. It lacked the impetus to defend those ideals as the New Right began to dominate. It was a Labour Prime Minister who put the issues on the central political agenda in his Ruskin Speech.

The 1976 Ruskin Speech

In his 1976 Ruskin Speech the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, suggested that there should be greater state control of education to meet the needs of the economy. The speech raised questions about value for money, standards of performance, and skills needed by employers. He gave particular priority to literacy and numeracy and bemoaned the impact of incompetent teachers. After the Ruskin speech Callaghan launched the 'Great Debate' on education aimed at reappraising all aspects of the education system, including those identified by the Black Paper writers'. The last of the Black Papers was published in 1977. Two years later a Conservative government was elected which returned to the 19th Century philosophies of laissez faire social policies and free market economic policies. These redefined education policy for the next thirty years and underlie planning for Academy Schools.

THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS 1979-1997

In 1979 the Conservative Party was elected and Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. Thatcher favoured a radical break with the Conservative education philosophy formation based on 'one nation'. She believed that the education debate had become dominated by thinkers such as Butler and McMillan who emphasised equality whilst she favoured greater freedom and more choice in the education system. She appointed to the chairmanship of the Conservative Research Department, Angus Maude, who also became Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party.

In his book 'One Nation, a Tory Approach to Social Problems', Maude wrote an essay on education where he outlined the general underpinning philosophy that 'schooling can and must be provided economically'. This was an idea which resonated throughout 19th Century thinking on the provision of state education. In a reference to the maintenance of high standards, Maude wrote that 'an average standard of education which is maintained by lowering the higher standards of quality is worse than

inadequate'. He refers to deploring the present tendency to drag down the brighter children to the level of the 'dull ones'. On the role of religious teaching, he warned that 'a system of education in which religion found no place would create a vacuum in which communism would soon spread'. On standards he defended private education:

'We believe it is essential that there should continue to be schools outside the state system, the best of them provide both a yardstick for educational standards and salutary competition for university open scholarships' (Maude et al 1950 p47).

The thoughts outlined above were endorsed by the later Chief Conservative Education Secretaries and were the catalyst of the philosophy of 'excellence in education' which evolved inside the Conservative Party for the next 35 years, particularly 'the belief that the State should provide, in the area of social policy, a minimum standard above which people should be free to rise as far as their industry, their thrift, their ability or their genius might take them' (Knight 1990 p13). Maude, along with Keith Joseph and Norman John St John Stevas, aimed to challenge the egalitarian lobby and to restore the belief that schools were for teaching literacy and numeracy, for developing skills and for raising job prospects.

The Thatcher Government formulated a clear educational policy in line with Conservative philosophy and based on notions of sound basic skills, choice of schools and academic excellence. It was formulated by those who stood for the preservation of what they saw as the best and most effective of traditional educational methods and structures, whilst granting the necessity to adapt these to the perceived changing needs of pupils and society. By this they meant the preservation of the grammar schools, the ethos of strong discipline, high educational standards and streaming by ability. This was a group of neo liberals and Conservatives united by a conviction that creativity comes from discipline and individual excellence best promoted by educational selection (Knight 1990).

The New Right sought to 'roll back the state' and the first few years of policy making were dedicated to cutting public spending and dismantling elements of the welfare state. From its election in May 1979 the Conservative Party set about developing and implementing the policies of the social market economy. There was an emphasis on cutting spending, privatisation, individual choice and consumerism (Holmes 1985). Although the Conservatives passed an early Education Act in 1980 introducing the Assisted Places Scheme, the reform of Education really gathered pace after they were re-elected in 1987.

The New Right had a preference for 'commonsense' over 'theory' and for 'skills' over 'the transformation of self and society by learning'. Education initiatives of the Thatcher era, rather than breaking the pattern of past educational traditions, reproduced them at a new level. The principle that underpinned them was that of the education market which strengthened central control in order to create the conditions for a free market in education with its four trends of privatisation, centralisation, vocationalism and differentiation.

The threat of privatisation was evident in Tory plans for educational vouchers; youth training delivered by private agencies and the support of private schools through the assisted places scheme. Centralisation was exemplified by the imposition of the national curriculum. Vocationalism could be seen threaded through MSC programmes and the TVI initiative whilst differentiation could again be seen in the assisted places and the attempts to reintroduce grammar schools. It also represented a continuation of the tripartite system with middle-class children following the old GCE route to a profession and others forming a middle tier of technical and business training with the lower tier of vocational preparation for semi-skilled or unskilled work.

A framework based on private sector models began to emerge. For example, the compulsory competitive tendering required councils to contract services to the lowest bidder. Of more relevance to the Academy Schools Programme was the introduction of City Technology Colleges or CTCs. In

1986 Kenneth Baker launched the City Technology Initiative which was intended to be a new form of technical school for the inner-city largely funded by money from private industry. It was to provide a new form of segregation and differentiation. The schools were to be independent of LEA control with a strong technological bias to the curriculum. The first phase was for twenty such schools. There is a more detailed analysis of this policy in Chapter 4.

The 1998 Education Act represented a full-scale privatisation programme (Simon 1987). Open enrolment would allow good schools to prosper and poor schools to dwindle and close by introducing market competition into education. Devolving finance to schools' headteachers aimed to introduce a business ethic into school management and to prepare the way for privatisation. It also allowed the privatisation of education by allowing a bare majority parental vote for opt-out in order to become an 'independent state school'. The National Curriculum, national targets in core subjects and a programme of national testing were not aimed at centralising power but at replacing those powers by market forces (Carr and Hartnett 1996).

The Government was offering consumers an improvement in 'educational standards'. The National Curriculum represented a framework in which national testing could operate to provide quality control for the education free market. These were similar to mid-19th Century proposals for private schooling with examinations controlled by the State. Its object was to create a market education provision on the principles of 19th Century liberal political economy. As then, in the new educational market, 'freedom and choice would be for those who can afford them and diversity will be a polite word for multiple educational apartheid' (Green 1991 p71). Planning for the future was about restoring the past by breaking with the 1960s and 1970s move to comprehensive education and returning to grammar schools' standards and traditions.

A distinctive New Right curriculum emerged, consolidating religion and morality, promoting science and technology and the values of British society

appropriate to the capitalist context by stressing relevance, enterprise and adaptability.

Green (1991) suggests that the Act was neo-liberal in three important respects:

1. It created an alternative network of schools
2. Schools were restructured to adapt them to market pressures
3. It introduced the theory and practice of choice

Tomlinson agrees that there was a coalition of neo-liberals interested in free market competition and public spending controls and Conservatives interested in preserving 19th Century notions of traditions, hierarchy, authority and order. 'The core focus of Conservative education policy under Thatcher was an emphasis on the use of markets and free enterprise to produce and to distribute goods and services with the minimum regulation wanted by consumers' (Tomlinson 2006 p32).

The vision was that of 19th Century, liberal individualism embracing the market, self-interest and profit linked to a traditional Conservative appeal to a moral 'authoritarianism' in which individuals accept a hierarchical understanding of their class, gender and race. It also contained the distinctly Victorian attitude that those who did not help themselves were not worthy of state help. Education was a commodity and by 1988 knowledge was to be regulated and controlled via a national curriculum based largely on a version of 19th Century public schooling. Learning would have the same distinct barriers between academic, technical and practical training that had been in effect in Victorian England and was still a preparation for a class divided society. (Tomlinson 2005).

'Failing Schools'

In 1992 the Conservatives won a fourth election and John Paton became Education Secretary. The 1992 Education White Paper formed the basis of

the 1993 Education Act whose key objective was to increase the number of grant maintained schools. One tactic to bring this about was the creation of 'failing schools' which would become grant-maintained. Schools judged as 'failing' by Ofsted would be placed in 'Special Measures' and the Secretary of State for Education would appoint an Education Association to take over if there was no improvement and could recommend that the school close or adopt GM status (DFE 1992). Although the LEA initially had power to help the school to improve, an Education Association could be appointed to manage such schools and the expectation was at the end of their stewardship the school would become grant maintained.

The criteria for failure were set out in the Ofsted Framework for the Inspection of Schools and in the Ofsted Handbook for Inspection of Schools (Ofsted 1995). Criteria included poor standards of achievement, poor quality of education, leadership and management and student attendance and behaviour. 'Failing schools were officially regarded as operating divorced from historical, economic, social, political and educational contexts and staff in those schools when it was declared failing were held solely responsible for its failure' (Tomlinson 2005 p79). The notion of failing schools also represented the sharp end of the introduction of market forces into education. Parental choice would mean that popular schools gained pupils, money and resources, whilst failing schools would lose parental confidence and pupil numbers and would be forced to close or become grant-maintained.

However, as Tomlinson points out, schools 'which took in those pupils regarded as undesirable, notably pupils with special needs, disaffected pupils, those excluded from other schools and second language speakers, became easy targets for the failing label' (Tomlinson 2005 p80). The first Education Association appointed to run Hackney Downs School had its recommendation for closure taken to the High Courts and the Government eventually abandoned this political strategy. It is worth noting that a member of the association in charge of Hackney Downs was Michael Barber who was appointed by the New Labour Government to head the Schools Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the Department for Education and Employment.

Schools began to go into 'Special Measures' and were publicly declared as 'failing'. Press coverage was negative and led to calls to discover the 'worst school in Britain' with different schools regularly receiving this title. The secondary school in which I taught went into 'Special Measures' a week after The Ridings School was declared the 'worst school in England' in the Daily Mail. Tomlinson notes, 'these were demonised individual schools, most of which were former secondary modern schools, or comprehensives serving disadvantaged class areas, whose Heads, teachers and Governors were held to be personally responsible for the underperformance of pupils'. (Tomlinson 2005 p79).

As one of its tactics, the Government used the weapon of academic research into school effectiveness and sought to detail the factors which made a school 'effective'. Schools were expected to meet Government targets for exam passes and improve this year on year or face Special Measures. Rather than tackle the basic inequalities of the socio-political economic and cultural order, attention was deflected onto the inadequacies of individual schools. 'Some schools have become sick institutions; they are regarded as a threat to the health of the economic order' (Hamilton 1996 p54).

Alternative views of the 'crises in education'

During the 1970s and early 1980s, sociologists, ethnographers and historians were discussing the limits of public education and arguing that it maintained unequal social relations. They argued that problems lay in the interactions of an unequal society and an education system which institutionalised particular orientations to knowledge and presented them as neutral (Bernstein 1973, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). They contended that the working class failed to benefit proportionally from schooling and that a section of that population rejects what schooling stands for and that rejection arises from the actual encounter within the current cultural character of the school.

Such themes were picked up in Labour education policies in the early 1990s, for example the Institute for Public Policy Research published a series of educational policy papers between 1990 and 1994 and in 1993 Ted Wragg and Fred Jarvis produced 'Education a Different Vision' (Wragg and Jarvis 1993). Such publications stressed the need for a new system of education for an educated democracy which broke away from a class-based education system. It was to be one which was based on community rather than individual needs and did not use education to maintain privilege. The last such Old Labour document was 'Opening Doors to a Learning Society' in 1994.

New Labour Policy

However, New Labour politicians realised that Tory electoral success was partly due to the attention paid to the new aspirant middle classes and in the late 1980s/early 1990s they began to develop a series of education policies which focused on 'raising educational standards'. Tony Blair was elected as Party Leader in 1994 and his new Shadow Education Secretary, David Blunkett, at the Party Conference that year moved towards a more conservative position of blaming schools for education and problems stating 'he would not tolerate children going to run-down schools with bad discipline, low standards, mediocre expectations or poor teachers' (Blunkett 1994). Labour Education Policy was being targeted to attract middle England voters. This proved electorally successful in 1997 and the policies of the new Labour Government continued to espouse a market in schooling and new forms of specialism which encouraged selection, while no moves were made to undermine the privileged position of private education.

By the time that Tony Blair set out his three main priorities for Government as 'Education, education, education!' at the Labour Party Conference in 1996, Labour had already done a u-turn on its promises to abolish league tables and had agreed with the Tories that international comparisons of literacy levels demonstrated a failure of teaching methods. (Ball 2006) In 1994 Blunkett had prepared the outlines of policies which were a continuation of

Conservative Party policies to centralise, regulate and control. A major problem was grant-maintained schools. Almost 1000 schools had opted for GM status and had support from middle-class and aspirant working class voters (Hatcher and Jones 1996).

In May 1995 Blunkett produced 'Diversity and Excellence' which suggested the inevitable three forms of comprehensive school – community school, aided school and foundation school, which allowed grant-maintained schools to opt for foundation status whilst religious schools could retain their existing privileges with aided status. This was followed in 1995 by 'Excellence for Everyone' (Labour Party 1995) which set out a framework for future policies, including literacy programmes, LEA target settings, specialist schools, exclusions and frameworks for Inspection, including the concept of fresh-starts for 'struggling schools'. The main difference between this and the old Conservative policies lay in areas like access to new technologies an end to the Assisted Places scheme and a reduction in class sizes.

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT 1997-2001

Labour was elected in May 1997 and quickly settled into passing a raft of education legislation and advice documents. The new Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, who had by then shadowed the post for the previous three years, immediately began to implement policy. Within a week of taking office a Standards and Effectiveness Unit had been established and within a month new targets for literacy and numeracy were set. Just sixty seven days into the new parliament, a White Paper, Excellence in Schools, was published. Reforms and initiatives gathered pace over the following year and at the 1998 Labour Party Conference it was revealed that there had been forty seven education policies and initiatives since the 1997 election (Ball 2006).

However what is most remarkable about all the apparent change was how little the education landscape had changed at its roots from the policies of the previous Conservative administration.

Many of the Conservative reforms of the previous governments became the backbone of Blair's decision to retain the national curriculum, tests and league tables, delegated school budgets and the school inspection framework. The Specialist Schools Programme, established by the Conservative Government to bolster the faltering City Technology College Programme, became part of New Labour's policy to create more CTCs in the guise of City Academies. The dramatic turnaround in Labour policies can be clearly identified with Blair himself and the team of advisors he gathered around himself when elected, David Miliband, Andrew Adonis and Michael Barber. Although Miliband was state school educated, Adonis and Barber had educational histories similar to Blair's and all the team were part of the Islington set. Also important was Blair's decision to retain Chris Woodhead in the post of Chief inspector of Schools but with extended powers when Ofsted also acquired the statutory right to inspect LEAs.

There was an acceptance of the continued dominance of choice and competition within education. Education was to continue as a market commodity and was to be led by consumer demand with competition between schools. Success was to be driven by league tables, school choice, specialist schools and 'failing' schools. Instead of an end to academic selection, there was a commitment to 'raising standards' and a continued emphasis on school effectiveness and efficiency with increased business influence. There was also a continued emphasis on regulation and control of the curriculum, assessment, teachers, teacher training and LEA roles (Tomlinson 2005).

The policies were to meet the perceived needs of a global economy where the key to a successful economy was seen as being an educated and skilled workforce.

One group of these policies which differed from predecessor governments were those which aimed to put more funding back into state education. These initiatives included cutting class sizes, protecting playing fields from

sell offs and additional money for school building repairs. Another group of policies focussed on school improvement including national changes to teacher training, school attendance projects, and initiatives to address 'failing' schools and underachievement in the inner cities through the setting up of Education Action Zones. It is this last cluster which is particularly relevant to the policy for Academy schools.

Labour and Social Inclusion

Under the Conservatives, parental choice and delegated budgets had established a quasi market in education with schools competing for pupils and seeking to attract parents by achieving positive test results and favourable positions in school league tables. As a result of this emphasis school exclusions had risen dramatically.

The new Labour Government had a declared commitment to social justice and in December 1997 the Government launched a Social Exclusion Unit attached to the Cabinet Office. Blair launched the Unit with a speech declaring, 'that we should make it our purpose to tackle social divisions of inequality' (Blair 1997). In 1998 the DfEE revised its mission statement and declared that its purpose was 'to give everyone the chance, through education, training and work, to realise their full potential and thus build an inclusive and fair society (DfEE 1998)

Labour promised an attack on poverty and social exclusion, especially for those living in the inner-cities and on council estates where jobs had disappeared in the 1980s and left serious economic inequality and a sense of alienation. Locating areas where the unemployed and disadvantaged were concentrated became a policy priority and in February 1998 five employment zones were identified with priorities being to regenerate neighbourhoods and help long-term jobless back to work. The New Deal for Communities promised £800m in funding for those areas (Home Office 1998).

In September 1998 Education Action Zones began to operate. These were intended to cover two or three secondary schools with their particular feeder primary and special schools and were to be run by Education Action Forums and were to promote innovative and experimental regeneration programmes. Each Zone was to be run for three years with £750,000 of funding from Government and funding from business partners who would also help to promote a business-led approach to education.

New Labour's policies for education argued that raising standards for all would provide fairer outcomes by tackling entrenched patterns of underachievement particularly in the inner cities. Initiatives like Excellence in Cities and EAZs were targeted at areas of social disadvantage. These were part of a broader social policy to bring 'excluded' groups back into society. As Ball concludes:

'Within this approach exclusion is constructed and addressed as primarily a social problem of community and family inadequacies rather than an economic problem of structural inequality. Families and circumstances and cultures are to blame and where appropriate the state will intervene to 'interrupt' the reproduction of deficit and disadvantage' (Ball 2008 p153).

'Failing Schools'

When the Labour Government took office it could have redefined the 'failing' school as one whose community had been failed by the underfunding and demonization by the previous administration. Instead, in January 1999, the Prime Minister continued to blame those schools for problems of social exclusion, 'When I look at some of the inner-city schools it is no wonder that parents feel they have to move their children out or make other arrangements' (Blair 1999).

In July 1997 the Government produced its first White Paper 'Excellence in Schools'. This developed ideas from the 1995 policy document 'Diversity and Excellence' (Labour Party 1995). In the third section LEAs were tasked by

1999 to draw up action plans to monitor and improve their schools and to tackle failure.

In 2000, David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, announced that education authorities should set up 'Fresh Start' schools to replace schools achieving less than the target of 15% A*-Cs in GCSE exams and therefore failing to achieve government targets. Under 'Fresh Start' the 'failing' school would close and reopen with new management, new staff and a new name. They would be run by newly recruited 'super heads.'

By 2000, eleven 'Fresh Start' schools had opened but the scheme was already running into difficulties. Many of the new schools were struggling to recruit and retain staff in schools with such uncertain futures and were also struggling to attract the pupil numbers that they needed to survive long term. As a response to this the scheme was re-launched with additional non capital funding. When exam results were published in August 2000, only one school, Fir Vale in Sheffield, reported a significant rise in exam performance whilst four schools had lower pass rates. The government shelved the policy after three high profile 'super heads' resigned in the space of five days in March 2000 and three schools were placed in 'Special Measures' by Ofsted.

In March 2000 the Secretary of State announced that City Academies would replace seriously failing schools. These would be run by central government in partnership with voluntary, business and church sponsors. They would be outside the control of the LEAs. The next chapter will examine in detail the policy development of Academy Schools.

Summarising the results of 'Diversity and Excellence', Tomlinson concludes that 'structural differentiation was ensuring a pecking order of schools which unsurprisingly, given the history of English schooling, continued to mirror the social class structure. Failing schools were at the bottom of that pecking order.' (Tomlinson 2005 p102).

The language of the inner-cities

The century-long association between schooling in the inner-cities, disaffection and disruption continued to be regarded as a major public policy challenge to New Labour. Thatcher had never hidden the links; she said, 'I never felt uneasy about praising Victorian values because they had a way of talking which summed up what we are now discovering. They distinguished between the deserving and the undeserving poor' (Thatcher 1993, p578).

The children of poor families under the Labour Government became the 'socially excluded', the children of disruptive and disrupted families, who were seen as a major reason for the exodus of middle class families from inner-city schools, especially in London, and also for the nurturing of a criminal underclass. These arguments historically resonated with echoes of the fears being expressed over a hundred years earlier in the 1840s and 1850s.

'Dealing with the children of those whom the Victorians had called the 'feckless poor', now known as 'disrupted families' became a policy priority as those families were seen to constitute a major reason why aspirant parents wished to move their children away from inner city schools. The government was caught in the contradictions of market policies, which encouraged schools to get rid of troublesome pupils, the cost of educating pupils outside the mainstream and fears of nurturing a criminal underclass. (Tomlinson 2005 p108).

Education Action Zones

Locating and concentrating on those areas where the excluded, disaffected, unemployed and disadvantaged were concentrated 'quickly became a policy focus' (Tomlinson 2005 p107). Five Employment Action Zones were established to help the long term jobless move back into work and a New Deal for Communities was launched (Home Office 1998). This promised £800 million to regenerate deprived neighbourhoods and, as a result, eleven

Health Action Zones were set up to promote health and the Education Action Zone initiative was launched.

Education Action Zones were local partnerships between one or two local secondary schools, their feeder primary schools, local businesses, parents and LEAs. Their aim was to boost standards in challenging areas. Each zone received a start up grant of £500,000 a year for three years. Each EAZ was to raise £250,000 of private sponsorship which would be match funded making a total of £1 million per year. EAZs were encouraged to use innovative methods to raise standards and to tackle disadvantage and disaffection. The promotion of a partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors was central to the initiative (DfEE1997 p4). It sought to appeal to a social justice agenda whilst at the same time continuing with themes of private sector partnership and enterprise. In a foretaste of what was to follow in the Academy Schools Programme, EAZs could vary the National Curriculum to focus on literacy and numeracy, could vary the national pay and conditions of teachers to attract staff and could bid to become specialist schools focussing on technology, languages, sports or the arts in order 'to encourage diversity'. (DfEE 1997 p40).

A pilot of twenty five Education Action Zones was established in 1998.

Excellence in Cities

In 1998 'Disaffected Children' was published by the House of Commons Education and Employment Committee. The Paper did briefly refer to issues of social inequality such as the socio-economic problems of the inner-cities and to unemployment and poverty, but rather than seek means to address these, it spoke instead of raising standards and offering vocational options, returning to the age-old notion that the disaffected children of the inner-city poor needed a vocational curriculum more suited to their needs which would engage their interest more than the traditional school curriculum (House of Commons Education and Employment Committee 1998). Regulations

followed which allowed the disapplication from two national curriculum subjects to allow greater vocational provision for the 'disaffected'.

In 1998, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, launched 'Excellence in Cities' and appointed Estelle Morris as Minister for inner-city education. He began his launch speech by congratulating Le Sainte Union School, a girls' convent school in Camden which, by coincidence, had achieved Beacon School status the same day. 'You have demonstrated how excellence can be achieved in the inner city. We need far more schools like yours.' This demonstrates the emphasis by the government on the school effectiveness debate. School effectiveness research claimed to show that some schools performed better than others in terms of school and pupil achievement in inner-city areas, and so schools continued to be held accountable for failure to meet targets. He goes on to say:

'Yes, inner city schools face tougher challenges than elsewhere. But we are uncompromising in our belief that parents in the inner city have the right to the same quality education as those elsewhere...we need to generate a step change in standards and aspirations in our major cities' (Blair 1998).

The action plan for the inner-cities again explored the by now familiar theme of low standards, low aspiration and failure in inner-city schools. It promised immediate improvements through an expansion of inner-city, beacon and specialist schools; specialist programmes for gifted and talented pupils; more setting; separate provision for 'disruptive students' in Learning Support Centres; the appointment of learning mentors and new smaller versions of EAZs as a result of evaluation of the pilot projects.

Reorganising Local Education Authorities

Excellence in Cities also changed the status of Local Education Authorities by declaring that any LEA deemed 'failing' by Ofsted could be privatised and in May 1999 the government named ten private companies who would take a lead in this initiative. LEAs were to be agents in implementing national

strategies and had a duty to maintain high standards in their schools (Tomlinson 2005).

A Labour Government was re-elected in 2001 and continued to emphasise the importance of education in the life chances of the individual and the economic health of the nation. However for the purposes of this study the roots of Academy Schools were now in place. In the next chapter I will analyse the details of the development of the policy for Academy Schools.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has sought to answer the question 'What did the Labour Government think is the value and purpose of Education'. It traced the roots of the policies of the previous Conservative Governments and their return to their conservative and libertarian Victorian forebears. It looked at the impact of this on education for the working class poor and agreed with the conclusions of Carr and Hartnett that 'One of the greatest achievements of the New Right has been to leave the traditional elite system of education more secure, more confident and more significant than at any time since the late 19th Century' (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p181).

New Labour policies promised and delivered much needed additional funding into education, especially in the inner cities, which had been starved of funding under the preceding Conservative Governments. However it failed to fundamentally re-evaluate what the educational needs of the working class should be in the approach to the 21st Century and continued to support a tripartite system of education with no overt re-examination of the domination of the private sector in general, and public schools in particular. There was a continuation of a grammar school model of a 'good' education teamed with streaming and a stress on vocational education for the 'non-academic' to serve both their needs and the economic needs of the nation. In short, the Blair Government never got to the heart of the matter. In part this is because he surrounded himself with a group of ideas people whose roots, like his own, were not in state funded education. A point which had been noted by Tawney about previous policy makers eighty years earlier. (Tawney 1931)

The late 1990s and the early years of the 21st Century under a Labour Government led to an increased blaming of secondary schools with low GCSE pass rates, a majority of them former secondary modern schools attended by economically poorer pupils. The naming and shaming of schools continued and attempts to alleviate social injustice were couched in terms which blamed those injustices on low expectations in the schools serving those communities rather than economic inequality. By this analysis the solution was to inject new energy in the guise of the private sector leading inexorably to fruition in the Academy Schools programme which is analysed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 – THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND ACADEMY SCHOOLS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to answer the question ‘Why do we have academy schools?’ It contends that the introduction of education markets in education which claim to offer choice and diversity continued to offer a gold, silver and bronze hierarchy of schooling which reinforced the social hierarchies in England. It also contends that academy schools could have been the opportunity for something truly radical – a missed opportunity to debate the role of education for democracy in the 21st Century. Instead policy developed in a way which served to confirm the status quo by failing to convert to notions of equality based on the principle of valuing each pupil’s learning equally without judgement of ability and aptitude in order to establish an education system which served the needs of the urban poor in a democratic society. The policy sought to rhetorically devalue the present system of schooling by making it appear ‘ugly, abhorrent and unendurable’ (Bauman 1991 p11). This chapter will examine in detail how Blunkett’s 2000 speech to the Labour Party Conference sought to lay the blame for low achievement in the inner cities firmly at the door of the existing schools in those areas and sought to marginalise any discussion of the equality agenda. It also examines the role of sponsors in the Academy Schools Programme and how this role enables the sponsor to influence all aspects of its schools in line with its own interests and values.

4.2 THE ACADEMY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

Under Tony Blair’s leadership, academy schools were an English policy initiative premised on high levels of capital spending and additional per capita spending per pupil, thus attracting additional funding into those areas served by academies. Academies were run by private sponsors on the basis of a funding agreement with the DfES which was individually negotiated for each Academy. They were ‘publicly funded independent schools’ (DfES 2005)

which operate outside LEA control and were directly accountable to the Academies Division of the Department for Education . They had and still have the freedom to determine their own curriculum, ethos, uniform and specialism and to choose their own Headteacher, staff and the majority of the governing body. Academies can also set aside existing national agreements on pay, conditions of services and teacher certification.

Academies appeared to have their roots in the Conservative Government's 1980s programme of creating City Technology Colleges described in Chapter 3, and in the American Charter Schools Movement of the late 1980s.

The Charter Schools Movement

The Charter Schools development was informed and influenced by the US School Choice Movement which promoted diversity in schooling as a means to increase student achievement and to provide options to low income parents and children, create an incentive to develop innovative curricula and provide public school choices to culturally and ideologically diverse social and ethnic groups .

The term 'Charter School' was first promoted by the New England educationalist Ray Budde, who suggested that small groups of teachers should explore new educational approaches within their own schools. These ideas were initially taken up by the American Federation of Teachers who in 1988 adopted the policy that local school boards should have the power to set up 'schools within schools'. The idea was to have hundreds or thousands of school based teams each experimenting with better ways 'to produce more learning for more students' (Shanker 1988). In 1988 George Bush was elected as US President and his newly appointed Assistant Secretary for Education, Chester Finn, attacked the Charter Schools Movement and the American Federation of Teachers support for them, declaring that their 'approach is like the old-fashioned Soviet Commissars – authoritarian and top down' (Shanker 1988b). A decade later Finn had become a supporter of Charter Schools (Finn et al 1997). The reason for this change to Finn's

views may reflect the history of the development of the Charter Schools Movement evaluation which informed the formation of the Academy Schools Programme.

The first Charter Schools opened in Minnesota in 1991 and by 2003 all but ten States had Charter School legislation. In 2005 the 'No Child Left Behind' Act gave further impetus to the programme with its emphasis on restructuring into Charter Schools public schools which were not making adequate progress. The four pillars of the 'No Child Left Behind' initiative were accountability for results, state freedom to innovate, use of 'proven' educational methods and the centrality of parental choice (US Dept for Education 2005). By 2009 there were more than 3,400 Charter Schools serving over one million children. The programme provided public funds for schools to operate autonomous and independent from the public school system with the express goal of addressing parents' and educators' frustrations with that system. In theory this freedom could have freed schools to create a curriculum which served the cultural needs of their students reflecting diversity and democracy, is envisaged by Budde and the AFT. However, Charter Schools were funded per pupil, based on the state average and responded to budgetary pressures by enlisting the help of private sponsors and Education Management Organisations which are private for profit companies operating Charter Schools. Charter Schools were not permitted to charge for tuition but may rely heavily on financial support from parents.

'Charters cannot charge tuition, but some impose fees, aggressively solicit contributions from families and pressure parents to raise funds. Whilst such practices increase a schools' budget, they make the school inaccessible to some families' (Shuratz 1996).

Whilst Academy schools in England do not charge tuition or necessarily seek financial parental contributions, they do impose an ethos and aggressively solicit parental support for such an ethos which similarly makes the school inaccessible for some families. This trend was also noted in research into Charter Schools.

‘Like all public schools, charters provide compulsory childcare and that costs a lot of money. Imagine if the affluent parents of 30 children looked for someone to provide a programme of education for one week for their children. How much would they be willing to pay? Imagine, then, if this were a diverse group of students, some with learning disabilities, some whose parents were less than fully active in parenting, some who did not have English as their first language. More importantly, public schools have to deal with social pathologies . . . and schools in high poverty areas even more so. Most telling, however, was the second hard quote I heard about a man who was seeking finances for his Charter School. The first question from the investor was: What were the Charter’s strategies for keeping out problematic students’ (Ford 2005).

By the time that Shanker died in 1997 he was concerned that using the Charter Movement was a means of privatising and destroying public education rather than a means of improving it.

‘Public schools played a big role in holding our nation together . . . whenever the problems connected with school reforms seem especially tough, I think about this. I think what public education gave to me . . . and I know that keeping public education together is worth whatever effort it takes’ (Shanker 1997).

Analysis of the Charter Schools model was one of the key elements of the first Price Waterhouse Cooper report into Academies for the DfES in 2003 which was not made public until February 2005. Their analysis was that improvements in educational outcomes in Charter Schools had been modest and that there was a danger in creating a two-tier school system in which the middle classes benefited from the better schools (Price Waterhouse Cooper 2003). By the time that this report was published there were already ten Academies in an advanced state of planning which opened in 2006. The government clearly linked academies with the Charter Movement in the introduction of the ‘Prospectus for Potential Sponsors 2000’ when David Blunkett wrote that City Academies would ‘...take account of the best lessons

of City Technology Colleges and Charter Schools in the United States' (DfEE 2000).

The introduction to the '2004 Academies Sponsor Prospectus' made no reference to Charter Schools but referred to the Academies Programme being launched '... as a development of the successful City Technology model. We are using the experience of CTCs to develop the Academies Programme. Many CTCs are converting to Academy status and are in the process of rising to the challenge of taking over failing or weak schools in their area' (DfES 2004).

Academy Schools and CTCs

In October 1986 Kenneth Baker, the Conservative Education Secretary, announced a pilot network of twenty City Technology Colleges in urban areas and appealed for sponsors from the business community, churches and existing educational trusts. Sponsors would own the CTCs, run them and employ the staff. Whilst the government would pay the running costs, sponsors would contribute to the initial capital costs – details later replicated in the City Academy Programme. Initially Kenneth Baker wanted sponsors to contribute £8 million towards capital costs but lack of sponsors led to the sum being reduced to £2 million – the identical sum required of Academy sponsors but fourteen years later representing a much lower proportion of the total capital costs, which in 1986 was approximately £10 million. Sponsors of CTCs could name the institutions after their company or organisation and had control over curriculum content.

However, the international companies and household names which they hoped to attract were not forthcoming and the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, made personal contact with companies to encourage them to become involved. The journalist Frances Beckett interviewed Jeremy Nicholls, then BP's educational adviser, who told him why BP was reluctant to become involved:

'The problem is that companies want to make friends in the communities where they operate. They do not support high profile initiatives which are seen by many people as divisive. There was a feeling that CTCs were going to focus a lot of resources on a few children. We want UKPLC to invest in the future of all its children. We were also unhappy about the confusion of an education agenda with a political agenda. The country needs to find means of educating more people to a higher level. The taxpayer at large is the proper personal to do that, rather than the BP shareholder' (Beckett 2007 p76).

So CTC sponsors tended to be smaller scale entrepreneurs and business people.

The CTC Programme was announced by Kenneth Baker at the 1986 Conservative Party Conference at the height of the Government's privatisation programme. CTCs were to be a new kind of school based in deprived inner city areas run by independent trusts and free from LEA control. Pupils at CTCs spanned the full ability range but, as long as the schools selected from all ability bands, they could select on the basis of aptitude, attitude and parental commitment to the CTC curriculum and ethos. CTCs were to teach vocational subjects and the skills which employers were demanding in the areas of science and technology. The arts curriculum was to be considerably reduced.

The rationale and structure of CTCs had obvious parallels with Academies as did the rhetoric used in relation to CTCs. The diagnoses of educational failure, the principles of educational success and the ideas of entrepreneurialism and innovation were strikingly similar. For example, Thatcher described CTCs as 'state independent schools' (Whitty et al 1991) whilst Blair described Academies as 'independent state schools' (Blair 2005). The Conservatives viewed the urban comprehensive school as 'uniformly mediocre and bureaucratised, in contrast with the CLC which is seen as embodying choice, diversity and freedom' (Weiner 1994 p43).

Similarly the Academy programme is presented as diversity from 'the strait jacket of the traditional comprehensive school' (Blair 2005a).

Fifteen CTCs were created in total, much less than the government had planned. The shortfall was largely due to a shortage of sponsors. CTCs continue to exist, have high overall performance rates and are oversubscribed. However, selection criteria may go some way to explaining this. Students were selected 'who are most likely to benefit from the College's emphasis on Science and Technology, have the strongest motivation to succeed and intend to continue in full-time education or training up to the age of 18' (DfES 2006). Such selection certainly helps to provide an inbuilt advantage in terms of exam results compared to neighbouring schools.

4.3 ACADEMY SCHOOLS-THE POLICY CONTEXT

Chapter 3 examined how the Labour Government elected in 1997 developed a number of initiatives to address low educational attainment in deprived areas of England. These included the Fresh Start Initiative and Excellence in Cities. The Academies initiative was prompted by a view amongst key ministers that existing approaches were not radical enough to challenge entrenched educational underperformance in the inner cities. They were to continue with the new build approach of Fresh Start but, to further facilitate innovation, academies would have a sponsor to bring new approaches and to contribute to building costs.

The City Academies Programme was launched in March 2000 in a speech to the Social Market Foundation by the then Secretary of State for Education, Davie Blunkett. The speech was entitled 'Transforming Secondary Education' and from this first speech Labour's spokespeople were explicit about their views of existing education in the inner cities.

'Where schools have been failing, we've taken action. Over 500 schools have come off special measures since 1997; others have been closed or given a 'fresh start'. Sometimes we need to do even more because turning around a failing school is never easy. City Academies will offer new hope where inner city schools have been failing' (Blunkett 2000).

Here Blunkett clearly links the new policy with the notion of failure and the closing of 'failing schools' through the Fresh Start Initiative, where schools were closed and reopened with a name change. The language in paragraph 12 suggests that schools were citing social disadvantage as the reason that students were achieving less GCSE success in some schools.

'There must be no excuse for underperformance. No child is preordained to fail by their home life, by their ethnic background their economic circumstances or by their gender' (Blunkett 2000 paragraph 12).

Later in the speech there is an analysis of free school meals and links to school performance and here Blunkett concedes that 'whilst these show that overall there is a correlation between levels of deprivation and school performance', he is quick to point out that the responsibility for achievement lies at individual school level 'it also shows the wide variations in performance between schools with similar intakes. 'Schools in deprived areas can and do achieve good results and we must learn from their example' (paragraph 19).

In a further attack on any analysis of educational failure being linked to socioeconomic and political factors, he reiterates his viewpoint that 'Inner city schools continue to achieve less than their counterparts elsewhere. Of course there are reasons for this but the challenge is to learn from those schools in inner cities and forgotten housing estates which have overcome the odds and to disseminate their practice' (paragraph 20). In reality such schools may vary widely in their intakes. Free school meals data is a crude measure which does not take account of known variables such as ethnicity, gender, school facilities, recruitment and retention rates etc. In the most quoted section of his speech Blunkett repeats the word 'excuse' from his earlier warnings:

'We will target disadvantaged areas and low performing schools and tackle failure whenever and wherever we find it. We will accept no excuses for underperformance or counsels of despair that nothing can be done' (Blunkett 2000 paragraph 27).

The language becomes more entrenched as Blunkett moves into the section of the speech which concentrates on setting 'floor' targets for schools and local education authorities.

'Cynics will say that school performance is all about socioeconomics and the areas the schools are located in. We say no child is preordained to fail by their class or by their gender or by their ethnic group or by their home life' (paragraph 36).

The new floor targets declared that by 2004 there were to be no secondary schools in England with less than 20% of students achieving 5 A-Cs at GCSE and by 2006 none achieving less than 25%. In addition there would be consideration of Fresh Start for any school that had not improved to 15% A-C at GCSE by 2003. All failing schools were to be turned round within two years, closed or given a Fresh Start. It was at this point in the speech that the Academy Schools Programme was announced as the 'more radical approach' needed in 'the most challenging areas'. He announced that over the next year the government intended to launch pathfinder projects for the new City Academies. These Academies were to replace seriously failing schools and were to be built and managed by partnerships involving the Government, voluntary, church and business sponsors.

'They will offer real change through innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum' (paragraph 42).

The schools were to have automatic specialist status.

The later part of the speech set the context and details of the proposals and referred to the Academies as being part of a wider programme to extend diversity within the publicly funded education sector which would work in three ways:

- Allowing new schools to be established within the publicly funded section. These schools would be foundation or voluntary aided schools set up by the private, church or voluntary sectors.

- Allowing private schools to be part of the publicly funded education sector.
- Allowing new promoters from the voluntary, religious or business sectors to take over weak schools and replace them with City Academies.

There was to be no single blueprint for the Academies but certain criteria were established:

- Proposals must explicitly include plans for improving the education of all pupils attending the school being replaced.
- Their Admissions Policy must be agreed by the DfEE.
- Academies could vary the National Curriculum, the school day and year and design new approaches to staffing.

Academies were legally created by the Learning and Skills Act 2000 which amended the section of the 1996 Education Act which related to CTCs. In 2001 Labour were elected for a second term and in the 2002 Education Act the term City Academy was dropped and the target was set for twenty academies to be opened by 2005 and, in addition, schools formerly known as City Academies and CTCs could become academies. Academies were to raise standards by innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum with a specialist focus on one or two curriculum areas. They were to represent a private public partnership with sponsors putting up £2 million and the rest of the funding including capital costs being met from public funds. The original estimate was that this would be to the tune of £10-15 million per academy (although academies have consistently come in over this budget averaging '£25 million capital costs per academy). Local Authority-owned lands and buildings were to be transferred to the new 'partnerships' which would both own and run the schools.

They were to be specialist schools, able to recruit 10% of students on aptitude and were to be their own admission authorities, though required to seek advice from local admissions forums.

By September 2005, the target date for twenty academies, seventeen Academies were open or planned. Sponsors of academies included philanthropic individuals, companies, charities and religious groups. As Ball notes, 'Many individual sponsors embody key values of New Labour, particularly the possibilities of meritocracy, of achieving individual success from modest beginnings and wealth creation from innovative ideas and knowledge' (Ball 2008). These individuals were presented as responsible capitalists putting something back into deprived communities as their 19th Century counterparts had done before them

By September 2009 there were two hundred and three academies operating in 83 local authority areas and approximately one hundred more were due to open in September 2010. How had this proliferation of academies come about?

Expanding the Academy Programme

As with CTCs, in the early stages of the City Academy Programme the initiative was failing to attract enough sponsors and, as Margaret Thatcher had done before her, Blair intervened directly. This time it was through a series of 'breakfasts' in Downing Street for potential investors. Leading private schools were also approached to sponsor academies. In October 2002, David Miliband, then the Schools Standards Minister, exclaimed in a speech to the Conference of Independent/State Schools partnership, 'The Eton Academy, the Winchester Academy – it has a certain ring to it!' (Centreforum 2008).

Similarly, Andrew Adonis in his introduction to 'Academies and the Future of State Education' extolled the virtues of private sector involvement in inner city education 'Academies are injecting the best of the DNA of private schools into the state funded sector'. (Adonis 1998)

The government was clearly signalling its support for the traditional standards and values of the English public schools and a view that these schools, with their years of experience of educating the wealthy elite, had much to teach

the state sector about education of the poorest inner city children. He concluded:

‘And it has the ability to make a major statement about equal opportunity and educational reform’ (Centreforum 2008).

Whilst Eton did not take up the challenge, in 2009 it did agree to ‘share’ its boating lake, twenty seven cricket pitches and 450 acres of parkland with the Slough-based Langley Academy, a move applauded by the Daily Mail in an article entitled ‘Swing, swing together (even with state school pupils)!’ Eton gives poor neighbour access to its famous boating lake’. The Mail goes on to quote:

‘the exclusive college where 19 prime ministers were educated will share the lake with pupils at a neighbouring state school . . . Langley’s pupils sporting skills will therefore be honed on the playing fields where the Battle of Waterloo was reportedly first planned and won’ (Daily Mail 2009).

However, the £28,000 a year fees at Eton will continue to ensure that only the richest and most elite of families can afford to send their sons to Eton and it remains unlikely that the next nineteen prime ministers will be educated at Langley despite their ‘equality of opportunity’ to access a boating lake. Eton’s involvement stopped short of any financial sponsorship. Langley Academy is sponsored by millionaire Sir Martin Abib.

In 2008 it was announced that Winchester School had joined the Academy programme and was planning to back an Academy being set up by the United Learning Trust in Midhurst, West Sussex. Announcing the move, Andrew Adonis, then Schools Minister, asserted ‘I think we’re getting quite close to the point where it has become mainstream for private schools and the independent sector to become involved with Academies’ before revealing that Winchester would not actually be giving any money but would be appointing people to the governing body and providing consultant teachers (the Independent 1.5.08).

This sponsorship 'in kind' of academies was instrumental in maintaining the charitable status of private schools, entitling them to millions of pounds a year in tax breaks and appeared in official draft guidance from the Charity Commission published in March 2008 (Charity Commission 2008).

By 2008, it was clear that raising £2 million for capital costs was hampering the move to meet the target of two hundred academies and the 'endowment' model of sponsorship was introduced, whereby all sponsors were instead expected to establish an endowment fund. As the Academy Sponsors website from the time stated:

'A sponsor from the educational sector may bring value to an Academy project through their reputation and expertise in the educational field but have more restricted access to charitable funding. For this reason whilst they are required to establish an endowment fund, they are not required to commit any specific sum to the endowment. Non education sponsors from 2006 are required to donate £500,000 to an endowment in the first year with further payments over the next five years of 'up to' £2 million in cash or kind'.(DfEE 2008)

Church Sponsors

The second major group of sponsors being targeted were the churches. Tony Blair, a committed Christian, gave his personal backing to the role of faith schools and the Labour Government promoted an expansion of faith schools and faith organisations and individual Christian sponsors became prominent within the Academies Programme. Their contribution as sponsors was perceived to be based on their relative 'effectiveness' in terms of their league table performance compared to non faith schools and in terms of their perceived positive ethos and adherence to Christian values. As Francis Beckett notes:

'Christian values is the most mischievous phrase in the language for it refers to values which are common to those of all religions and none, truthfulness, honesty, care for others . . . that sort of thing. For Christians to call them 'Christian values' is to colonize them' (Beckett 2008 p87).

The emblems of this 'ethos' in many academies copy the emblems embraced by grammar schools – traditional school uniforms of blazer and ties, a strict code of discipline and the return of the house system.

All faith sponsors to date have been from within the broad Christian tradition which has led to concerns about how little such sponsors reflect a modern diverse society and how they instead may suggest that 'forms of cultural restorationism are being sought' (Woods et al 2007 p50). Jones (2003) uses the term reagenting to refer to Labour's deployment of new agents as instruments of its transformation of the school system.

The concept of reagenting may help to explain why the government was keen on church sponsorship, as the churches are regarded as having the ability to reclaim moral values in the inner cities and as having a history of successfully running schools. Indeed the Five Year Strategy specifically praises the United Learning Trust:

'We are encouraging the expansion of successful schools and the leaders and governors of successful schools in response to parental demand, which it intends to manage in a federal relationship with eight private schools dating back to the 19th Century. The Government warmly welcomes such initiatives' (DfES 2004 para 27).

Whilst church sponsors are seen by the government as instilling and reasserting cultural norms and values, Ball (2008) asserts that these norms may no longer be relevant in the 21st Century and in the case of some sponsors may represent the undemocratic hijacking of the curriculum to present a particular viewpoint. The fiercest criticisms have centred on the role of the sponsors who represent fundamental Christian views having roots in American/Christian right wing alliances. The two sponsors who most display these evangelical emphases are the evangelical Christians Sir Peter Vardy and Robert Edwiston.

Sir Peter Vardy is an evangelical Christian who helped to build his father's car dealership into a company with an annual turnover of £1.7 billion. In 2001 he

was knighted for services to education. He has sponsored four academies and was the first sponsor to come forward and offer money when City Academies were first announced in 2000. He was already a sponsor of a CTC in the north east of England. His Emmanuel Schools Foundation controlled four Academies and took its name from the Emmanuel CTC which he also sponsored. Sir Peter is a creationist who believes that the Bible tells the literal truth. The mission statement for all Emmanuel Academies lists the 'Christian' values being promoted as 'honourable purpose, humility, compassion, integrity, accountability, courage and determination' (Emmanuel Schools Foundation 2010). However, in 2002 several leading scientists, including Richard Hawkins, accused the schools of teaching creationism in science lessons. Whilst Vardy denied being a creationist, the Headteacher of King's Academy, Nigel McQuoid stated:

'Schools should teach the creation theory as literally depicted in Genesis . . . It's a big issue to say that Darwinism is the only answer. Some new literature is asking some interesting questions about it' (Quoted in Beckett 2007 p72).

There were also accusations that the schools were explicitly teaching that homosexuality is wrong. McQuoid commented as follows:

'The Bible says clearly that homosexuality is wrong. I would indicate that to young folk. I don't have to respect everyone's opinion. I don't respect the opinions of people who believe it's fine to live with a partner. Headteachers are responsible to God and the standards of the Bible. Nothing in the school should contradict the teaching of the Bible' (Quoted in Beckett 2007 p72).

In response, Liberal Democrat MP Paul Holmes told the House of Commons 'Concerns about teaching creationism in science lessons or explaining that God saved us in the Second World War have been aired before. Such people should not be given control of tax funded state schools' (Holmes 2004).

In the same speech he aired concerns that the two academies in Middlesbrough had permanently excluded forty two pupils whilst holding onto the money for their education. He then went on to highlight the work of Faithworks.

‘Faithworks is a Christian consultancy that seeks to help Church groups to set up more academies and provides advice on the way in which organisations can get round anti-discrimination laws that protect gay people. I thought that we had got rid of Section 28 but perhaps it will return via the back door’ (Holmes 2004).

The Christian charity, Oasis Trust, has eleven academies. It has set up an Academies Consultancy called Faithworks. The Oasis Trust is committed to the Faithworks Charter which states that members should never impose their faith on others. It was founded by Steve Chalke, a high profile Baptist Minister and television presenter. It suggests that organisations, including schools, which are ‘committed to upholding the sanctity of sex as being part of marriage’ should include this belief in their standards for staff behaviour.

There have also been widely reported concerns about the high number of exclusions from the Vardy Academies. In the first six months of Trinity Academy, 148 students were excluded, whilst in 2009 parents protested to the press when they received letters about poor parking which explained that if they committed three parking infringements outside the school gates, their child faced permanent exclusion. In 2006 it was reported that Kings Academy had an exclusion rate which was ten times the national average (Guardian 2006).

Robert Edwiston is the sponsor of two Academies in the Midlands. He too made money in the car business and used some of his money establishing a TV channel called ‘Christian Vision’ which broadcasts by satellite from Birmingham to developing countries across the world at a cost of £63 million. He is a supporter of the Conservative Party and in 2007 supported the party with a £2 million loan, later converted into a donation. (Birmingham Post 2007).

In 2005 he had been nominated for a peerage by Michael Howard but the peerage was blocked by the Lords' Appointment Commission after objections from the Inland Revenue. He is a committed Christian with a traditional view of education which favours a collective act of worship daily, 'Christian' values and strong discipline. Christian Vision exists 'to introduce people to Jesus and encourage those who acknowledge Him to accept Him as the Son of God and become His true followers' (Christian Vision 2010). His schools also teach creationism and his defence of this is 'If you tell people they are descended from monkeys, how can you expect them to behave like anything other than monkeys?' (Quoted by MP Paul Holmes 2004). Both Academies are called Grace to reflect his religious views. Teachers at both Academies must subscribe to 'Christian values'.

The Philanthropists

A number of individual sponsors have come forward to sponsor Academies. These include Sir David Gerrard, a property developer knighted in 2003 for services to Charity; Barry Townley, Chairman of stockbrokers Insinger Townsley, recommended for a peerage but blocked by the Lords Appointment Commission; Sir Clive Bourne, President of Seabourne PLC and knighted in 2005 for services to Charity and Education; Sir Frank Lower, founder of an advertising agency and knighted in 2001 for charitable work; John Madejski OBE, Chairman of Reading Football Club, and Jack Petchey OBE, car salesman and property developer.

Jack Petchey's autobiography is promoted on the website of Jack Petchey Academy, Hackney, London, and its description of their sponsor sums up the rags to riches philanthropy applauded by the Labour Government:

'Jack Petchey – self made millionaire – tells how he struggled as a young boy in school, started working at a young age, spent the war years as a messenger boy and in the Fleet Air Arm, then after being discouraged by the worlds' 'You're not management material' proved the world wrong by going from strength to strength and finally giving it all back to young people in London, Essex and Portugal. A modern day rags to riches' (Petchey Academy 2009).

In 2006 the 'cash for honours' scandal resulted in the arrest of Des Smith of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust who was accused of promising that honours could be lined up for supporters of the Academy Programme. Education Minister Bill Rammell defended the programme:

'If business people believe and other people believe in education and are sufficiently committed to give their time, money, commitment and resources to drive up standards in state schools, then that is a cause for celebration not denigration. There should be no reason why, if you commit yourselves in this way you should be disbarred from receiving an honour, but it's certainly no guarantee of that'. (Guardian 2006).

However, the government stressed that the Trust was moving away from a reliance on high profile millionaire sponsors and instead would be encouraging established education providers to join the scheme.

One group of philanthropists have become major sponsors of the Academy programme through the charity Absolute Return for Kids (ARK). ARK is a charity set up by wealthy business people in the hedge fund business. It is the inspiration of Arpad Bussan, a French multi-millionaire. In 2005 Jay Altman was appointed their Director of Education. Altman was the founding Principal of the New Orleans Charter Middle School and ARK planned to use his experience to establish a number of academies on the US Charter Schools model. By 2009 ARK had eight Academies, six in London, one in Portsmouth and one in Birmingham. By 2012 it aims to be running twelve Academies. ARK's mission is as follows:

'ARK is an international charity whose purpose is to transform children's lives. Founded in 2002 by a group of leaders in the alternative investment industry, pooling their skills and resources to improve the life chances of children, ARK delivers high social returns on philanthropic investment . . . ARK's programmes are highly focussed on meeting predefined strategic goals in the areas of HIV/AIDS (Sub Sahara Africa) Education (UK, India) and children in care (Eastern Europe).' (ARK 2000)

Their missionary philanthropic work is thus divided between developing nations and England's inner city poor. In August 2009 Stanley Fink became Chairman of ARK. Fink was Chief Executive of the Hedge Fund Standard Asset Management and of the Man Group which lost £11 million overnight in November 2008. He was also appointed Treasurer of the Conservative Party in 2008 and donated £1 million to the Conservative Party that year (TES 2009). EIM, the hedge fund group which set up Absolute Return for Kids, lost \$220 million after investing in the fund run by the Wall Street broker, Bernard Madoff. ARK lists its main activities as follows:

'ARK applies the same principles and disciplines to managing the charity as it would to running a business, focussing on the transformation of children's lives through rigorous research monitoring and evaluation. ARK's work meets high standards of efficiency and effectiveness.' (ARK 2000)

In an interview with the Guardian, Busson made the following comments:

'I have lived in the UK for over a decade . . . From the day ARK was set up, it was clear to me to find projects where we could have a high impact in the UK. There is a crisis in education and this is the biggest issue governments face today. What qualifies us to be doing education? Nothing. But will we as entrepreneurs try to bring the best people we can find to help us? Yes!' (Guardian 2005).

Academies and Vocationalism

Academies automatically acquired specialist status and the vocational theme was central to their philosophy. Whilst this was presented as widening the range of courses which would appeal to young people and produce a skilled workforce, it rested on a core belief that the role of education should be linked to the economy and the labour market. There were indications that the 'Government wants to encourage Academies to be more closely geared to the 'human capital' needs of particular sections of the business market'

(Hatcher and Jones 2006 p601). An analysis of the academy curricula which is presented as a successful blend of education and training practical and theoretical skills may instead be a reworking of the old agenda of 'gentling the poor' and represent a new and blatant form of social control which replicates existing roles in the structure of society (Silver 1980).

Chapter 2 argued that differences in status between 'academic' and 'vocational' education is deep rooted in the history of English education at all levels. When writing about the emergence of central and technical schools in England, Wiener states that the difference in status 'reflected assumptions about the narrow and unreflective nature of technical studies and an underlying anti-industrialism inherited from Victorian England' (Wiener 1994 p57). This argument was put forward earlier by Silver who argued that the difference in status between academic and vocational education represents a 'dormant cultural field' with the highest status associated with the 'liberal' education of the gentry which distanced itself from the world of work. (Silver 1990).

Whilst the Academies programme raises serious philosophical concerns with regard to ownership, control and accountability, the most destructive aspect may be the dismantling of any entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils, regardless of ability, which represents a further attack on a system of common schooling which gives access to all levels of education to all sections of society. In his analysis of the curriculum of state schools and academies in 2008, Titcombe found:

'worryingly degraded curriculum opportunities in a number of academies for which data had been indirectly obtained, giving rise to concerns that some, or even all, pupils in some of these schools are being denied a right to a broad and balanced educational experience appropriate to a full participatory citizenship in a modern European democracy' (Titcombe 2008 p49).

The same study also revealed data which showed that apparently spectacular school improvement in terms of five or more GCSE/GNVQ A-C passes had been brought about by the substitution of general curriculum subjects with

easier vocational alternatives with disproportionate equivalence to GCSE pass rates (Titcombe 2008). Despite Academies being exempt from the Freedom of Information Act, the study found evidence of extreme use of the strategy to boost headline results and league table performance. Such courses draft students at an early age (Year 8 or 9 students aged 12-14) into vocational pathways which cannot progress to higher education levels. Academies have increased the use of vocational educational qualifications like GNVQ by a factor of 14 times compared to the predecessor schools (Titcombe 2008). Such moves increase results rapidly but also represent a belief in the need to train pupils for their role in the practices and ethics of free market capitalism so as to properly prepare them for employment. Extreme examples of this include an Academy installing its own call centre for training, an Academy purchasing a hairdressers shop and backstreet garage for vocational courses and Manchester Airport, a prospective sponsor, stating that the purpose of its Academy will be to provide employees for the airport, whilst in Bristol the Academy focuses on vocational courses such as catering and hotel work. (Hatcher 2006, Titcombe 2008).

Thus the predominant concern about the curricula of Academies is an emphasis on the acquisition of skills at the expense of other educational values. This fear is central to concerns about the ability of sponsors to influence the curriculum and places these concerns within an English educational tradition dating back to the second half of the 19th Century. New approaches to the privatisation and vocationalisation of education in the inner city through this lens represents 'gentling the masses' and promoting acceptable behaviour amongst a compliant skilled workforce for the 21st Century.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter sought to answer the question of why we have academy schools in English inner cities in 2010. It contended that the introduction of education markets and private sponsors into inner city education have served to reinforce social hierarchies. By rooting academies in the philosophies of the

CTCs and Charter Schools, they repeated the rhetoric of the failure of existing education in the inner cities and linked ideas of entrepreneurialism, privatisation and innovation with educational success. The view of the 'bog standard' comprehensives described by Labour are indistinguishable from the description of them as 'uniformly mediocre' under the Conservative Government which preceded it.

The sponsors of academies represent the predominant and dominating hierarchies which exist in our society – the rich, the (mainly Christian) Church and successful entrepreneurs. It was always unlikely that under their guidance the Academy Programme would represent a radical approach to inner city schooling. Instead it was bound to lead to cultural reproduction, restorationism and reagenting in the development of the new school system being developed. The ability of the sponsor to determine the curriculum represents a particular concern in terms of education for an inclusive society whilst the centrality of the vocational theme could merely represent a return to educating the working class for their place in society. By rigorously imposing setting in the academies, sponsors are failing to convert to notions of educational equality based on the principle of valuing each person's learning equally without prior judgements of ability and aptitude. The speeches which launched and which surrounded the Academy Programme are littered with references to the low standards and low aspirations of the existing inner city schools which preceded them. Thus the blame for urban deprivation and inner city turmoil was laid firmly at the door of those schools and the staff already working in them, thus marginalising any debate about notions of equality, economic redistribution of wealth and resources and the dominance of the public schools in the processes of government.

The history of English education is littered with policy makers who had no direct knowledge of the State system and would never dream of sending their children to it. Tony Blair and Harriet Harman demonstrated that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Carr and Hartnett contend that the English education system in the late 19th Century was not designed for, or by, the citizens of a democratic society but to 'educate workers, servants and subjects' (Carr and Hartnett 1996). This thesis contends that this was also

the case in the missed opportunity of the Academy Schools Programme of the Blair government.

CHAPTER 5 – NORTHTOWN COMPREHENSIVE – A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT

5.1 Northtown Comprehensive – A History

Chapter 2 examined the history of English education for the urban poor during the 19th and early 20th Century and contended that the system was not designed by or for the citizens of a democratic society but to educate 'Workers, servants and subjects' (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p68). Education of the urban poor 'demonstrates the use of education as a social cement rather than an agent for change' (O'Day 1982 p238).

Chapters 3 and 4 contended that whilst the Academy Programme brought much needed resources into the inner cities, it was based on the assimilation of 'the issue of social class inequalities into the general rubric of raising standards' (Hill 2006 p13). They also asserted that the Academies are not posited in a radical new approach to inner city education but instead represent a remodelling of the old tripartite system which has historically dominated the English system of secondary education.

This case study described in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 seeks to illustrate aspects of the Academy Schools Programme by focusing on the history and experiences of one school community in a city in the north of England. It traces the economic and social context of the predecessor school and the development of an Academy and examines the way that the Academy subsequently developed. It also examines who the key players in the Academy are and the background of the Trust and sponsor who developed the Academy. It ends by examining how the Parent Trust will be involved in the new Academy Programme planned by the Coalition Government elected in May 2010.

Northtown School – A History

During the late 19th Century Northtown underwent significant industrial development and, in order to meet the needs of that industrialisation, the city sought to establish a school to provide the technical knowledge to support its development as one of the most significant steel manufacturers in the world. The synthesis of this concept was the development of Northtown Central School and College. The initial plans for the school were drawn up following the Education Act of 1870 and the buildings completed in 1894. Elementary classes taught basic literacy and numeracy and provided recruits for entrance by exam at the age of 13 for boys to join the City Technical School which selected from across the city. The school offered its own diplomas in two areas – engineering and building – with courses such as pattern making, foundry practice and brickwork. A college on the same site founded by a local industrial philanthropist provided a medical school which was the forerunner of the city's university (Roach 1999).

In 1934 the school became the Central Technical School which operated until 1964, educating over 15,000 boys for jobs in the steel, engineering and building industries. In 1964 the school moved to purpose-built premises on the outskirts of the city and changed its name to Ashtown Secondary Modern School and later amalgamated with its girls' equivalent to become Ashtown Comprehensive School. Ashtown amalgamated with a neighbouring school to become Northtown Comprehensive School in 1988. Northtown Comprehensive is the predecessor school of Northtown Academy.

Northtown Academy – The Economic Context

Northtown Comprehensive School was formed in 1988 by the amalgamation of two former comprehensives in a city-wide initiative to reduce the number of surplus secondary places due to financial pressures on the local education authority caused by the economic recession and compounded by the impact of rate capping. The Conservative Government elected in 1979 privatised key nationalised industries, including the two industries central to Northtown's

economy. Factory closures and job losses which had begun in the late 1970s accelerated throughout the 1980s and local unemployment which had stood at 4% in 1978 rose to 15.5% by 1984. The manufacturing industries, which had employed over 50% of the city's workforce in 1971, employed just 24% by 1984 (Winkler 2008). In 1984 rate capping was introduced by the Conservative Government to impose a legally enforceable ceiling on the rating power and therefore the spending power of local authorities. In 1984-5 the block grant paid to Northtown was £84.3 million as compared to £89.9 million in 1981-2 and its ability to make up the shortfall was removed by the Rates Act 1984. Northtown was subjected to rate capping in 1985 and again in 1987 (Grant 1986). With the private sector deserting the city, the city council hoped to step into the breach.

‘The reaction was for the public sector to lead the city out of its decline; the city would grow its own business’
(Interviewee 2007 Winkler 2008 p13).

The council made a commitment to address the deep economic problems of the city. Northtown had been controlled by the Labour Party for an almost unbroken period since 1926 and had a long history of municipal socialism based on high expenditure on local services. The city council promoted locally-rooted regeneration policies in the belief that the recession would be short-lived and that economic setbacks would only be temporary. However, this local government led approach to regeneration was at odds with the market oriented policies of Thatcher's government which believed that private investment was the key to reviving economically depressed areas.

By putting itself at odds with the government, Northtown was one of a small handful of authorities to miss out on major government funding programmes for some time. In addition, the government further curtailed the power of local government by abolishing the city-region governance of the metropolitan councils (Winkler 2008) and removing key regeneration functions from local government into independent quangos called Urban Development Corporations with the expressed aim of improving private sector financing of regeneration initiatives.

A critical juncture in the council's history came in May 1985 when the council agreed to set a 'legal' rate and . . .

‘set in motion a train of events which would, inevitably, financially undermine the extended infrastructure of local social services (from special schools for maladjusted (sic) children to old people's homes) which the local Labour administration had proudly built up over the years’ (Taylor et al 1996 p66).

Rather than prompt rate capping the council cut the city's expenditure budget by £27 million in 1987, a year before the two schools amalgamated to form Northtown Comprehensive, and the year of the third Conservative election victory.

The painful birth of Northtown Comprehensive

During the mid 1980s Northtown underwent a process of school and college rationalisation. A number of secondary schools were closed or amalgamated and a new system of tertiary colleges was developed. The tertiary system was intended to be city-wide with all schools becoming 11-16 schools and losing their sixth form provision. However, lobbying in the affluent south-west of the city led to six schools retaining sixth form provision, essentially leading to a two-tier system of schooling in the city. This rationalisation led to the amalgamation of the two schools that formed Northtown Comprehensive School.

The two schools that amalgamated were very different in profile. One had a mix of students from private and public sector housing stock and was a middle achieving school, whilst the other school was a very low attaining school in terms of exam results and had a catchment which was formed from the four poorest wards in the city (Taylor et al 1996). The headteacher of the lower achieving school was appointed Headteacher of the new school, whilst most of the higher achieving school's leadership team took retirement packages. There were extensive rebuilding plans but when the school

opened in 1988 it was based on two sites, both in dire need of rebuilding and a half a mile apart by car or public transport. For the first six years of its life the school faced large scale annual compulsory redundancies of teaching staff which led to instability and severely restricted its ability to develop its curriculum in response to the demands of the new National Curriculum.

Initially parents continued to choose the new school but with the publication of the first league tables in 1992, the school compared unfavourably with its close neighbours and was close to the bottom of the league tables. The school began to lose students from all year groups to nearby schools and was failing to attract new students to the school. The Headteacher was absent for almost a year with stress related illness and the leadership team was struggling to cope with the impact of budget cuts caused by the reduction in income due to LEA cuts. In 1993 the Education Act introduced new measures on intervention in 'failing schools'. The school was visited by Ofsted in 1994 and was placed in the category of 'serious weaknesses'. This led to the loss of more of the student population and also of staff who left to join more 'successful' schools.

In 1995 Ofsted returned for a full inspection and the school was placed in Special Measures. This led to further instability in terms of staffing. The headteacher and his deputy took early retirement and left within a term. A new headteacher was appointed and took up post in September 1996. Ofsted's next termly visit identified eleven teachers as having 'shortcomings in their competence'. Five teachers left over the next two terms and the remaining six were subject to 'incompetency' proceedings. Five teachers immediately took sick leave. The medical certificates of four of them stated 'stress related' problems and the fifth referred to 'clinical depression'. The other member of staff left to take up a post in another school. Three of the five teachers were dismissed and two retired on the grounds of ill health.

The newly appointed Headteacher was part of the DfES research into teacher ill-health in 2000 where he is quoted as saying, "Getting rid of these five teachers is one of the things I am least proud of doing. In my opinion only

one of them was unfit to be a teacher. They just needed to be in a school which did not have the inner city problems we encounter daily.” He also questioned what the research refers to as ‘two sets of received wisdom’, that the Headteacher is the vital ingredient in the success or otherwise of the school and that long-serving staff are automatically part of that failure. “There are 20 or so teachers who have been here for years and who, if they were to leave, would make it impossible for me to run this school effectively. They have developed an understanding with pupils and the community that is vital to the school's efficient functioning” (Bowers and McIver 2000 p115).

The school emerged from Special Measures in 1999 by which time it had been involved in the pilot of the National Literacy Strategy with students and staff, including myself, featuring on the National Strategy Training Video for Secondary Schools in 1998. The Ofsted Report praised the headteacher for his ‘determined and inspirational leadership’. Over the next four years the school was partially rebuilt, it amalgamated onto one site, it collected two School Achievement awards for outstanding progress, gained Artsmark and Sportsmark accreditation and had a successful Ofsted in 2001 which again praised the leadership of the head and the commitment of a ‘core of long-serving dedicated staff’.

5.2 SEEKING ACADEMY STATUS

Despite its recent achievements, a substantial part of the school was housed in a crumbling patchwork of flat roofed buildings dating from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, with one additional new block added to enable the school to amalgamate onto one site. The site was unfenced and contained a public thoroughfare between two housing estates. It had thirteen exits and entrances which could not be locked because of fire regulations. It suffered from large numbers of ‘unofficial visitors’ during the day and serious vandalism in the evenings and at weekends (costing over £32,000 of the school's budget 2002-2003).

In 2001, the school's Ofsted Report described its setting:

“The school is situated in an inner city area characterised by a high level of associated social problems. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is high and well above average. Student mobility is high. The proportion of students on the Special Educational Needs Register is high” (Ofsted Report 2001).

In 2002 when the school began to consider academy status, the rate of unemployment in the school’s catchment area was two and a half times the national average. Nine percent of adults in the area were classified as permanently sick, 60% of households had no car and 37% took no holiday away from home. Forty percent of wage earners earned under £10,000 and 50% of children lived in a house with no wage earner (Headteacher’s Report to Governors Autumn Term 2002). The school had spare places in every year group and pupil turnover was high, with students who could not gain a place in their local school being bussed in from all over the city. Many of these were children of families facing multiple challenges and a large number had either a label of SEN, serious attendance problems and/or seriously disrupted housing and education histories. The LEA’s predictions at the time showed that falling numbers in primary schools would begin to impact on the secondary sector by 2010. Northtown’s potential catchment was predicted to fall from approximately 350 in 2004-5 to 260 by 2011-12. The school was currently attracting about half its potential catchment and if that trend were to continue it would be seriously undersubscribed and under threat of closure if the council decided to remove surplus places in the city as it had in the 1980s.

The case for seeking Academy Status

The school responded by looking at alternatives to secure the long term future of the school on that site and, in partnership with the LEA, the school considered several options. One option was to seek a rebuild under the Building Schools for the Future initiative and to link the rebuild with a re-launch of the school under a new name and with post-16 provision in partnership with the local college provider. A second option was to express

an interest in seeking academy status. The LEA and the school presented both options to the school community. (Headteacher's Report to Governors Autumn Term 2002).

In his initial presentation to staff in 2002, the Headteacher and the Chief Education Officer from the Local Education Authority delivered a joint message which highlighted the following reasons for seeking academy status:

- To enable radical change to speed up school improvement and to give more students success
- To increase post-16 stay on rates (the school had the highest number of NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in the city
- To contribute to a transformation agenda for the community by involving the local community in the school's regeneration
- To radically reform the image of the school in terms of its buildings, facilities and curriculum

The overall aim was to provide the best educational facilities for all the community and to ensure a healthy long term future for the school. The Headteacher also made explicit his belief that the new facilities would assist staff recruitment which was a serious issue for the school. His commitment to inclusion was made clear in his final statement, 'Although the proposal will raise standards by bringing in a wider proportion of our catchment, one of the benefits will be that we can enhance our provision for disadvantaged and Special Needs students'. (Headteacher's Report to Governors Autumn Term 2002)

Potential Sponsors

The school and the LEA were explicit about the type of sponsor being sought.

‘The sponsor must put the needs of the community first. Creating a school which did not commit itself to its immediate catchment would fail to provide the boost our community needs’ (Headteacher’s Report to Governors Autumn Term 2002).

Following our initial expression of interest in 2002 the school and the LEA were approached by a potential sponsor who was already involved in sponsoring another City Academy. The sponsor was a member of an American fundamentalist Christian group and the tone of his existing school was avowedly religious including an adherence to the teaching of creationism. His existing Academy selected 10% of its catchment by aptitude.

Our concern was that the Christian ethos and the curriculum of the school would be influenced by the beliefs of the sponsor, who is a creationist, believing that the universe was created by God in 2004 BC. The Principal of his existing Academy had jointly authored a pamphlet about his educational and religious views, ‘In Britain the Christian churches were active in the field of schooling long before the state took over . . . In retrospect it is a matter of regret that the churches so readily relinquished control of education to the state’ (Christian Institute 1995). He was also clear about the nature of the Academy he led:

‘If Academies are to succeed, they need to be led and staffed by people who are obedient to God’s truth as revealed in the scriptures’ (Christian Institute 2000).

In 2004, our concerns were proved well founded when his successor as Principal provided an interview in which he explored his views on the role of the Academy in educating for sexuality and personal morality:

‘The Bible says clearly that homosexual activity is against God’s design. I would indicate that to young folk ’ (Beckett 2007).

Whilst the local education authority was willing to enter into discussions with this sponsor, the school was not and the Headteacher made explicit his reason why.

‘Whilst I fully support the idea of becoming an Academy I have always believed that the most important feature has to be the main sponsor and to be suitable the sponsor must put the needs of the immediate community first’ (Headteacher’s Report to Governors Spring term 2003).

The sponsor’s approach was rejected. Talks with two other potential sponsors took place but did not progress because of issues relating to funding and post-16 provision.

The school decided to pursue its original idea of a re-launch using the BSF provision as a platform. However, in 2004, the school and LEA were approached by a potential sponsor already involved with several Academies. This sponsor was a Christian Trust, welcoming children of all faiths or none, whose literature spoke of delivering high quality education in areas of social disadvantage long broadly Christian guidelines. Its avowed aim was to ‘reach into the margins of society’. After extensive talks and consultations the sponsor was accepted by the local education authority and the school governors and in autumn 2004 an Expression of Interest in becoming an Academy was submitted to the Education Minister. The Expression of Interest was approved in March 2005 and the formal consultation process began. The consultation supported the opening of the Academy and it was approved with the date for opening set in September 2006.

In his Summer Report to Governors in 2005, the Headteacher summed up the mood of anticipation with the school.

‘I am very confident that the Academy will prove a huge asset for our community and especially for the young people in our catchment area. We have to accept that the issue of under-achievement remains a national problem in urban areas. Being part of a radical attempt to provide a long-lasting and sustainable solution is very motivating and exciting’ (Headteacher’s Report to Governors Summer term 2006).

5.3 PLANNING AN INCLUSIVE ACADEMY

‘For Blair the social engineering function of education is much more to do with instilling discipline and responsibility than equality’ (Rentoul 1997 p43).

Throughout the history of the development of secondary education for the English working class, certain voices were influential whilst other voices were ignored. This was certainly the case with the development of the Academy Schools Programme. Whilst the Labour Party in the 1990s was formulating education policies focusing on choice, vocationalism and globalisation, others were arguing that there had never been a greater need to educate all young people for personal growth, to respect diversity and to find their individual voice in their community. Whilst there was some agreement that the Labour Government elected in 1997 had substantially increased resourcing into the inner cities, there was also concern that the programmes for improvement that it funded, including the City Academy Programme, represented a lost opportunity to build a comprehensive system of schooling fit for the 21st Century (Ball 2008, Allen, Benn, Chitty et al 1999, Greene 1997).

In 1992 ‘A Different Vision’ had laid out the requirement for a modern society to view high quality education as an essential investment in the skills and knowledge required to cope with the challenges of the 21st Century. It clearly argued that education should be a public service rather than a market place commodity. Education was to be a process supporting individual development and social justice. Its authors criticised the 1992 and 1993 Education legislation for being based on a limited and socially divisive set of principles. They set out a different view of education which:

‘...must present to pupils a set of ideals, a way of living in which learning matters, a belief that the world can become a better place through their efforts. Education should enable all children and adults, according to age, ability and aptitude, to improve the quality of their lives through the development of their intellect and imagination’. (Wragg and Jarvis 1993 p12).

These were the ideas and philosophies which were driving our desire at Northtown Comprehensive to take advantage of the financial incentives being

offered by the City Academy Programme and to use those resources to restructure an inclusive, comprehensive educational resource for our community. We wanted to develop an Academy which recognised the needs, challenges and diversity of our community. The school context in which children learn is generally one in which middle class norms dominate and one which 'coaxes' working class children to meet particular externally imposed standards (Bernstein 1970). Instead we wanted to create a climate for learning which was valid and relevant for inner city children in 2006.

The Labour Government saw academies as providing a type of compensatory education and was clearly presenting inner city schools as contributing to the failure of disadvantaged young people. However, schools were also being linked with notions of providing a civilising influence over children being labelled as culturally deprived. Inner city schooling was again being urged to 'gentle the masses' by providing the structures being perceived as absent in the rest of the child's life in what was constructed as a notion of deficit families.

'If only the parents were interested in the goodies we offer, if only they were like middle class families then we could do our job' (Bernstein 1970 p64).

Bernstein contended that when:

children are labelled as 'culturally deprived' and parents labelled as 'inadequate', then the child is seen as needing to adapt to, and absorb, the culture of the school in terms of literacy, language, dialect, behaviour and social relationships whilst 'all that informs the child, that gives meaning and purpose to them outside of school ceases to be valued or accorded significance and opportunity for enhancement within the school' (Bernstein 1970 p62).

At no discernible stage did the Labour Government engage in any systematic analysis of the contexts and conditions of individual schools and their relationship to the cultures of the children and families in the inner cities. Nor was there an acknowledgement that those inner city cultures had values, skills and cohesions to be celebrated rather than demonised. Instead the discussion was driven by a 'standards' debate where school league tables

were used to measure certain groups and communities by what they lack when compared with others. The first Ofsted report for Northtown Academy is littered with references such as 'little tradition of further or higher education', 'low attainment on entry', 'legacy of underachievement'.(Ofsted 2008)

Schools are judged on their 'ethos'. In all literature on City Academies there is strong emphasis on the notion of ethos, strong discipline, moral frameworks and values. These are made public by codes of conduct, anti-bullying policies, home school agreements etc. However, values are also transmitted through the curriculum selected and delivered and the use of streaming of students into academic, vocational and sub-vocational pathways from an early age. Thus defining students by what they are unable to achieve in the curriculum being offered, compared to what is perceived to be culturally most valued. However, if the contexts of learning within the school setting do not respect the diversity of cultures within it and relate learning to the students' own knowledge and identity, then it is not delivering the student-centred learning which it should. It was the view of the leadership team at Northtown Comprehensive that the resources provided by the Academy Programme could enable child and community-centred education to thrive and could energise the whole community. However, this would require the development of a whole-school values system which recognised that 'the social experiences a child develops is valid and significant' (Bernstein 1971 p65). This would only be achieved if this recognition permeated all aspects of the new school's pedagogies, learning contexts and culture.

One risk of the Northtown Academy process was that an 'ethos', based on the Christian values of respect, responsibility, hard work and good discipline, espoused by the sponsor might be used as a vehicle for engineering a different social class make up when the school became more popular. Ball (1993) argues that markets in education generate differentiated and stratified systems of schooling. The possibility existed that the strict enforcement of 'traditional' codes of dress and discipline might cause some families to opt out either by choice, economic necessity or a feeling of cultural distance from

what was being offered. If this became the case, the Academy would not be the inclusive community resource we envisaged. Instead 'the school gate (would) still stand as an electronic turnstile which bars entry to those children who do not metaphorically hold the correct pin number' (Slee 1999 p172). An additional risk was that the sponsors would view the most socially disadvantaged families in terms of individual and family 'pathology' (Tomlinson 1992). If these families were seen as a challenge to the central ethos of the school, there was a risk that they would be formally or informally excluded from the Academy because they failed to meet its norms and expectations. Unlike other markets, in the inner city education market, it is who the client is that matters as much as the service being offered. What is produced as a result is a stratified system made up of schools which can afford to turn away certain clients and other schools which take not only their own clients but those that other providers refuse to serve. (Ball 1993).

Ball argues that parental choice and the development of markets in education works as a mechanism of class reproduction by assuming that the ability, skills and predispositions to exercise choice in the education market place are universally available and thus the 'non choosers' are labelled as disinterested, poor parents, whilst the parents who choose their educational setting are further advantaged since the distribution of resources follows their child to their chosen school. However, when broken down, the ability to make informed choices about educational settings requires a complex set of skills such as the knowledge of local schools, time and the ability to make sense of all the information available through a wide variety of media, understanding of the choice and application system and the positive presentation of the applicant and their family (Ball 1993). In the same vein, Dale argued that in selection of applicants to City Technology Colleges, the predecessor to the Academy Programme, a place at the CTC was seen as a 'reward for parental commitment to family, self improvement, initiative and deservedness' (Dale 1989 p4) - language which resonates back to the language of Victorian attitudes to the deserving and undeserving poor. Whilst the planned Academy was non-selective, if it became oversubscribed in the future the allocation process would grant places to those families actively choosing the

Academy. Northtown Comprehensive had the highest number of families in its feeder schools described in the admission process as ‘no forms’ – families who made no choice and were offered a place in the nearest school with available places after the first round of the admissions process. Currently those families were still able to gain a place at Northtown Comprehensive as it was undersubscribed. They may not be able to do so if the Academy proved more popular than its predecessors. As Ball (2008) points out, the system of choice is itself value laden in that it presupposes a set of values which place individualism, mobility and standards above a valuing of the local community and the local community school and which by its nature undermines the idea of local, comprehensive education. Academies were presented as part of the diversity from ‘bog standard’ comprehensives,

‘condoning the idea that some schools will be better than others and encouraging parents to aspire to those better schools although never explaining which children and parents would deserve to be in the worst one’ (Benn and Miller 2005 p15).

Planning for Inclusion

The decision to seek an Academy at Northtown Comprehensive was rooted in a belief that inner city urban education could be different if it had the resources necessary to replicate some of the advantages of private and public schools, alongside a commitment to include the whole community in educating itself.

Between November 2004 and July 2005, the school supported a piece of research, which I carried out, into the possibility of laying the foundations of inclusive practice in the early stages of planning for the Academy, i.e. the planning that took place in the pre-feasibility stages before any monies are released and the Academy is formally approved. The aim of the research, which was carried out under the tutorship of Sheffield University Sheffield Teachers’ Action Research Programme, was to listen to the voices of the

main stakeholders – school, sponsor, LEA, the community - and identify whose voices were dominating if there were differences in philosophies of inclusion. A second strand was to identify whose voices were missing and to try to make those voices heard. The background reading for this period focused on looking at the ideological analyses of education and social class and to use these as the basis for creating an Academy which would educate for democracy rather than economy.

In the earliest stages of the planning for Northtown Academy there was heavy reliance by the local education authority on the thinking of the Leadership Team of the existing school. The Leadership Team undertook a visioning weekend at a local hotel at which each member of the team prepared a five-minute presentation of our individual vision for the Academy. We then worked on a shared vision to take forward to a staff training day the following month and to the Governing Body a week later. Each of the seven presentations had explicitly references to inclusion and for a social justice agenda. The Report to Governors noted the following comments:

Headteacher: ‘The school will be totally ambitious and totally inclusive fostered by strengthened and improved special education needs provision.’

Deputy Head 1: ‘Achieving with the full range of ability from our catchment area and highly aspirant for all students.’

Deputy Head 2: ‘A school that serves the community as it has never been able to serve the community before.’

Assistant Head 1: ‘The new school will pride itself on placing inclusion at the centre of its ethos.’

Assistant Head 2: ‘We will develop a curriculum to interest and engage all levels of ability and one which ensures that those at risk are actively engaged.’

My presentation took the form of a letter to the Leadership Team of Northtown Comprehensive and explained what the school looked like six years later in November 2010 (see Appendix 1).

This presentation was adopted as the one which we would use with staff, governors and community stakeholders as it was felt to encapsulate our vision in a format which would be accessible to all the stakeholders.

At this stage initial building plans were submitted and these stated that the footprint of the building had the front facing aspect facing the most affluent section of the community, with the rear facing the least affluent. The Headteacher and governors immediately contacted the sponsor and architect and the plans were redrawn. At the staff meeting in 2004, the Headteacher said:

‘Initially the plans looked at the school facing in the opposite direction to the current school. However, the school will not turn our back on that section of the community that needs us most.’

At the time this was a crucial indicator that the school was to seek a more comprehensive catchment but not at the expense of the most disadvantaged.

At that meeting staff were overwhelmingly positive about the Academy as a vehicle for community pride and cohesion and a radical and exciting change. One member of staff suggested ‘It sounds more like a way of life than a school!’ The collated staff responses after the meeting spoke of a commitment to flexible learning, better meeting the needs of the community, providing a school to educate the whole community and having the resourcing to provide for all needs and abilities.

Planning for the Academy happened at what felt like breakneck speed compared to the usual timescale in schools for planning wholesale educational changes. By July 2005 the footprint of the building had been planned in some detail, the curriculum was designed in draft and policy documents on admissions and special educational needs had been agreed in principle. The new Governing Body was not yet formed and its interim duties were carried out by a Project Board consisting of representatives of the DfES, the LEA, the school, the sponsors and the design and construction team.

On 25 January 2005 the Project Board released its first summary report to all stakeholders. Under the section called 'Aims and Objectives', there were references to 'equality of opportunity' and of 'striving to enable every student to achieve their full potential'. The concluding statement of the project definition stated that 'The new centre of education will be an all ability school with an Admissions Policy that will be all-inclusive and will comply with Admissions Law and the Code of Practice' (Northtown Project Brief 2005).

In the section on Special Educational Needs, the policy outlined that it would have regard to all national and local policies on SEN with detailed descriptions of the co-ordination of educational provision for SEN and the role of the SENCO. It specifically committed the new Academy to students with SEN. 'The Academy will be as inclusive a school as possible, catering for the needs of all students. The Academy's guiding principle will be one that enables students to achieve their full potential whatever their starting point'. This vision was reflected in the detailed footprint of the building which had plans for specialist one to one and small group rooms in each curriculum area to enable individual and small group work in inclusive settings. There was also a specialist suite of small rooms within the Sixth Form area to facilitate vertical opportunities for small group work. The Project Board also submitted an application for additional resources to be made available by the DfES to meet the needs of the growing number of students in the primary feeder schools who were described by the feeder headteachers as having 'multiple special educational needs'. In particular the application highlighted the high number of students with poor speech, language and communication skills and an increasing number with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The document states that 'These needs must be tackled through strong and effective provision if standards are to be driven up and so that pupils gain the skills and knowledge they need for life.'

Additional funding was also sought to ensure that the design of the building facilitated the amount of support required to meet that need, including integrated accommodation in each curriculum area, an SEN resource base to facilitate inclusive teaching and learning, a confidential meeting room, a

therapy/medical suite/bathroom/shower and sluice room and a parents/carers facility. The submission was approved by the DfES and additional funding was provided for 132m² of additional space.

At this stage of planning the Senior Leadership Team and the Governors of Northtown Comprehensive believed that we could produce a school which was truly inclusive and comprehensive. We believed that it was not the academy process itself which was critically flawed but factors such as the views of the sponsor on selection, admissions, exclusions and SEN provision, and the pressure for quick fix solutions which might tempt the Academy in its early stages to try to change its client group for one which could quickly demonstrate a raise in 'standards' using measures like attendance and exam success.

One flaw in the early stages of the Academy planning was that because the Academy did not yet exist, there was no representation for potential parents on the planning board. Parent Governors of the existing school could represent the views of existing parents but could not contribute to the plans for inclusion and SEN in the new school. We decided to carry out a telephone poll of all students on the SEN Register at Northtown Comprehensive School which sought to evaluate existing practice by asking questions about their child's current progress. However, the final question asked if they would be prepared to be part of a focus group to help to advise on SEN provision at the new Academy. Nine parents agreed to be part of the process and three of those had children at the school on the SEN Register at School Action Plus stage for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Their names were passed to the Project Board and parents visited the school to look at the plans for the new building and contribute to the planning process.

Between April and July 2005 we also planned specific strategies to engage existing students and families in the new school. We planned that between November and April of 2005/6 we would hold interviews with each student and their families to discuss with them the opportunities and challenges of the new Academy and to draw up an individualised learning plan for each student

which would drive the curriculum provision inside the overall design. Central to this would be the use of the additional funding to reduce group sizes, provide a plethora of curricular and extra curricular activities and employ members of the local community to provide an 'army' of additional workers to support learning both in and out of the classroom.

5.4 Our Vision for the future

In September 2005 the mood of the school was one of optimism. We had deliberately sought academy status despite some apprehensions about the process and despite some individual political concerns amongst governors, senior leadership and staff. We had been prepared to wait for the 'right' sponsor who had aspirations to meet the needs of the local community. We had made early decisions, e.g. building design, which had the potential to positively impact on inclusive pedagogies, and we had tried in a small way to ensure that parents of those most at risk from the process were involved in the building design, and that all existing parents and students would have their needs analysed and used to design the curricular of the new school.

Much of the reticence around the development of academy schools focused on a return to 'traditional' values and ethos of the grammar schools with its rituals harking back to the 19th Century public school traditions. At Northtown Comprehensive that was not the focus of the Leadership Team and Governors when we sought academy status. We wanted instead to secure a truly inclusive school which placed lifelong learning, not ethos, at the centre of its raison d'être. Many of our aims reflected those aspects of the private sector which prompt families to pay for their services instead of opting for public schooling. We aimed to provide:

- Inspirational leadership
- A talented staff team committed to the inclusive aims of the school and the needs of the community
- Small class sizes
- Access to a diverse range of cultural and extra-curricular experiences

- Individual tutoring to meet the needs of students
- Access to learning for longer than the traditional school day
- Access to a curriculum which was broader than the national curriculum

Running parallel to this was our vision of creating a truly comprehensive school for our local community based on a belief that all children have the capacity to reason, to participate, to learn together through collaborative teaching pedagogies and to use their learning to energise their community within a democratic society (Simon 1998, Benn and Chitty 1996, Carr and Hartnett 1996). This vision would be delivered in state of the art buildings deliberately designed to be inclusive of all its community.

The Headteacher of Northtown Comprehensive had been the driving force behind the development of the vision for the Academy and the early planning and development of the project. He was committed to providing the vision and philosophy of inclusion which would characterise our Academy. He was backed by the Governors, the local education authority and an experienced leadership team which, between them, had one hundred and fifteen years of working within our school community. One of the challenges which had faced Northtown Comprehensive was its ability to recruit and retain a high quality, committed teaching force. Our staffing plans in the draft stage included a broad faculty structure which, whilst providing a clear career structure for staff, also allowed the development of broader curriculum experiences than the narrow, national curriculum subjects.

We intended to use the ability of the Academy to vary national pay and conditions of service to recruit staff who could prove that they were committed to our ideals and our community. Three of the existing staff in management positions in the school would move to a new faculty of inclusive teaching and would be paid as Advanced Skills Teachers. Their role would be to develop inclusive practice within the faculties in the Academy and across our family of primary schools by developing inclusive pedagogies and developing individual learning programmes for those children who we were currently failing to reach. These programmes would be highly resourced using additional support for speech and language development and social,

emotional and behaviour development services of the local authority which we would purchase from them.

Northtown Comprehensive was already successful at recruiting support staff often from within our immediate community. As an Academy we would be able to recruit additional teaching assistants from the local community and attach them to each faculty to help to develop inclusive teaching at classroom level. We already had several highly skilled teaching assistants who were interested in a career in teaching but had not pursued this because of financial constraints. We began to form a partnership with the local university to enable vocational courses to be offered on-site for members of support staff. These would include degree level courses and would provide opportunities for members of our community to access learning whilst still being able to earn their living.

The school was currently an 11-16 comprehensive school and had the lowest take-up in the city of further education at the age of sixteen. It also had the highest number of NEETS in the city – those students aged 16-19 who had left our school and were not in education, employment or training. The individual education plans to be negotiated with students and their families would tease out their hopes, needs and expectations for education, training and employment from the age of eleven to the age of nineteen and, in order to help to meet those needs, we planned to offer a range of courses and training opportunities on the school site both during the day, in the evenings and at weekends. These would be staffed by a combination of teaching staff, support staff and partnership with the local college, a neighbouring school, and the local university.

Our curriculum planning was mindful of the fact that the building and infrastructure would need to serve the needs of 21st Century education, where learning might take place in a variety of settings other than just classroom, e.g. virtual settings, and the plans included a cyber café for use by the whole community. We believed that the idea of one thousand young people all arriving at the same time, changing lessons at the same time and learning at

the same time may not be the most productive way to organise educational experiences. From the earliest meetings staff discussed the fact that the school may need to be more flexible in organising access to learning and that this may mean that staff needed to be more flexible in their working hours. There was a general acceptance that this was appropriate if we were to meet the needs of our community and some staff welcomed positively the possibility of working more flexible times. The trade unions were involved in all the discussions and we reassured staff that no-one would be pressured into flexible working times. Staff needed to feel optimistic and energised rather than discomfited by the changes we planned if we were to achieve our recruitment and retention aims.

The academy schools which opened between 2002 and 2010 were automatically granted specialist status. From our earliest attempts to recruit a sponsor for the Academy, the Governors and Senior Leadership Team were clear that we would be seeking a sponsor to support a Performing Arts Academy. This was to ensure that the new Academy would value the widest possible range of educational talents rather than the narrow 'academic' subjects or the narrow range of 'vocational' pathways being espoused by some academies (Woods et al 2007). We wanted to ensure that all students would be able to benefit from access to a wide range of cultural and extra curricular experiences both locally, nationally and internationally. An additional reason was that we wanted to complement the range of specialisms that were already available in our section of the city which already had schools specialising in maths, business and enterprise, sport and leisure and languages. Our aims were summed up in the views of Geoff Whitty in his speech to the Campaign for State Education:

'Educationalists need to push for an enriched curriculum rather than a narrowed curriculum Raising literacy and numeracy by Gradgrindery, whilst neglecting the arts is not in anyone's long term interests, least of all the disadvantaged' (Whitty 2001).

We also deliberately chose a sponsor who would not be seeking the option to select 10% of its intake by aptitude and ability in the chosen specialism. This was crucial to our commitment to the principle that all our students were of

equal value, free from any prior judgements about 'ability'. Many of the students in our local community may have had little access to the performing arts and any assessment of aptitude or ability would be more likely to be a test of prior experience, e.g. the ability to play a musical instrument and therefore biased towards the least disadvantaged.

In June 2004 we informed students and their families by letter and at a series of meetings that we were to enforce the school uniform and advised them of the rules when buying school clothes for the following term. On the first day of the autumn term over eight hundred and fifty students turned up in the required uniform but more than two hundred and fifty had only partial or no uniform. The learning mentor team contacted the family of every child not in full uniform. Individual agreements with time limits were made with each family taking account of their own personal and financial circumstances. By October half term we had the whole school in full uniform. For the rest of the year we monitored uniform daily and negotiated our way through broken washing machines, blisters and a number of trips to Asda. From 2005 we adjusted the Northtown school day to match the timings of the day in the sponsor's existing Academies and at the same time introduced a more formal learning ethos system with systemised sanctions and enhanced rewards.

During the planning for Northtown Academy between 2002 and 2005, we tried to produce our own radically different vision of what an academy could look like. Our vision was to work:

‘to advance an agenda for inclusion in the target driven and achievement orientated market place that education has become . . . to see that things can be better and to trust that those around them . . . can and will change their practice’ (Dunne 2004 p138).

The Academy which opened its doors in September 2006 was very different to the one we had envisaged. Our vision was not theirs. Chapter 6 will examine in detail the development of the case study Academy between 2006 and 2010.

CHAPTER 6 – NORTHTOWN ACADEMY ‘GENTLES’ THE POOR

6.1 A CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP

In October 2005 the school was in the middle of its planning for the new Academy when it was at the centre of a high profile classroom incident in which a girl student was slashed in the face by another girl student. The incident placed the school at the centre of a media frenzy with the Schools’ Minister, Jacqui Smith, linking the case to the launch of legislation to give teachers new rights to restrain ‘unruly’ pupils.

‘It is terrible for her and her family. We’re absolutely determined that schools should be safe and secure places which are about teaching and learning, where all children can feel confident and teachers are able to teach them’ (Guardian 2005a).

The incident was featured in a number of TV specials on school bullying and violence in schools. In the subsequent court case the school was portrayed as the epitome of the inner city violence being portrayed at the time by the Labour Government. A local newspaper reported extensively on the case, as did many national newspapers. The Headteacher asserted, ‘I think in 30 years of teaching this is the only case I have ever been involved in with this kind of violence. The case itself in no way reflects general discipline in secondary schools today.’ However the prosecuting barrister referred to ‘longstanding bullying problems at the school’ whilst the Director of the Local Education Authority told the local press that he had ‘called an inquest at the school following the incident which had resulted in a series of changes’. These changes had included pupil surveys on bullying and extra supervision of areas of the campus where students felt vulnerable. He concluded, ‘I am acknowledging that there does seem to have been low level and on a couple of occasions more significant bullying. This is a serious matter and an issue for the school to reflect on’ (Yorkshire Post 2006).

The school had always operated an 'on call' system in which a senior member of staff was on duty at all times, a policy common to many secondary schools. In the short term we decided to reassure staff and students by doubling the provision so that a senior member of staff was on duty in each wing of the school. This was referred to in the same article as 'precautions have been set up at the school with bouncer type guards now patrolling the corridors'. In fact the 'on call' team were the existing leadership team and learning mentor team with six of the team of the ten being female, none of us were 'guards'.

On the day that the knife incident was reported in the press, the sponsors announced that Northtown's Headteacher had not been appointed to the post of Principal of the new Academy and would no longer be involved in the planning for its opening. This was a serious blow to the whole school community and broke the continuity of the vision between Northtown Comprehensive and Northtown Academy which the Leadership team had envisaged.

We understood that the challenge now for us as a leadership team would be to build a positive relationship between the existing school community and the Parent Trust and sponsor. One challenge would be to prepare students and families to meet the 'higher expectations' of the 'traditional ethos' especially in terms of preparing for the wearing of a formal school uniform of blazer, shirt and tie which was the Trust's non-negotiable school uniform for September 2006 in line with all its existing chain of academies. The school's existing uniform was a sweatshirt with school logo, a white polo shirt and black trousers or skirt. In reality many students wore jeans, tracksuit bottoms and trainers and whilst younger students generally wore the sweatshirt, fewer students did so in upper school and by Year 11 most barely adhered to it. The priority for the school was that students attended and achieved and enforcing a dress code was less of a priority. However, we knew that this would not be the case in the new Academy.

6.2 Developing the new Academy 2006-7

‘The great end aim of education was the formation of character’ (Bradby H 1900 p21).

‘I think our founders would have been pleasantly surprised had they realised in 1883 the nature of the charity they were creating . . . the great challenge for schools is to engage with the skills and character needed for employability and flexibility in an increasingly global economy . . . we believe our founders would be thrilled that we are responding to the challenges of our time’ (Lord C Archbishop of Canterbury, Chair of Trust, Trusts website 2009).

The Headteacher of Northtown continued to lead the school and did all he could to facilitate planning for the Academy, even though he was no longer part of the planning team. In his final report the depth of his disappointment at not being appointed is evident as is his continued optimism for the school’s future:

‘It is hard to believe that I was appointed to the leadership of Northtown Academy nine years ago. When I joined the school had been placed in special measures . . . They assumed that when a school publicly failed, no-one would send their children there. Of course they were wrong and for two reasons. Many people are very loyal to their local school and all schools have positive aspects to them. This was true of Northtown and I was immediately impressed by the skills, commitment and talent of many people involved with the school . . . I cannot pretend that the last eight months have been anything other than the most difficult of my teaching career. It is quite difficult at times to remain positive when I am the only person to lose their job, and there are times when I have felt humiliated by the process. It is still clear that the decision to become an Academy is the right one and the sponsors are the right sponsors. I am genuinely sorry that I will not be moving into Northtown Academy but I will always be grateful to have had the opportunity to lead one of the most challenging schools in the north of England out of special measures and secure its long term future’ (Headteacher’s Report to Governors Summer term 2006 p1).

6.3 New Leaders Emerge

The sponsors approved a new leadership structure consisting of an Executive Principle leading two sister academies, a Principal of Northtown Academy, three Deputy Principals and four Assistant Principals. The newly appointed Principal of Northtown Academy was promoted from within the Parent Trust's chain of academies. He was Deputy Principal of one of their other Academies. He had never visited the school and had not applied to be Northtown's Principal. He had applied for the post of Principal in his own academy but had been unsuccessful and was instead offered the Northtown post. His own academy had appointed a Church of England Bishop who had previously been Headteacher of a private school in the south of England. The Executive Principal had previously been headteacher of a high achieving Catholic school. It was described by Ofsted as 'outstanding' and their report noted that the Catholic ethos pervaded all aspects of the school's life and staff were praised for offering 'a fine model of the virtues of hard work and personal responsibility'. The report also notes that the school regularly had over six hundred applicants for a hundred and eighty places (Ofsted 2003).

The new leadership team took up post in February 2006, working alongside a team of consultants employed by the sponsors. The school opened in September 2006 and at the end of October 2006 the Principal of Northtown went on extended sick leave. The Executive Principal announced that he would be interim Principal of Northtown. The Principal left his post at Christmas 2006 and the Executive Principal formally took over as Principal of Northtown. By February 2007 two Deputy Principals were on long term sick leave, as was the Assistant principal for Inclusion and the Head of Inclusion. All four staff had left the Academy by July 2007. In his report to the local council's Children and Young People's Scrutiny Board in 2008, the Principal summarised this period of the Academy's development.

'The Academy set off to a poor start last September and it was not until the middle of November that strategic direction and ethos were introduced. It was vital to set priorities. Things were out of control and gaining control was top of the list' (Sheffield City Council 2008).

At the end of 2005-2006 the new Academy Principal wrote to parents announcing the formal school uniform of blazer, shirt, tie and formal trousers, skirt and shoes. All students were provided with a free school uniform paid for from the Government's SUG B (Start up Grant B), which was a one-off top up payment which Academies received to make start up changes to the school. Students and families complied fully with the uniform and there were no confrontations or exclusions about non-compliance. However when the Executive Principal visited the school in the second week of term, he was concerned that in his view some of the children had poor hygiene and that their shirts were not clean and white enough. He asked the Learning Mentor Team to purchase a washing machine and dryer and to turn one of the pastoral rooms into a laundry room. One of the new Assistant Principals was given the task of going around classrooms and congregational spaces checking on students' cleanliness and hygiene. The Academy purchased spare shirts, socks and underwear and students were asked to go to the laundry room to change into clean clothes whilst their own clothes were washed by the mentor team and sent home with them for the next day. Later that month the Executive Principal was concerned that a number of students had had their clip-on ties unclipped and stolen and the whole school was issued with more formal traditional ties.

Students were assigned to houses named after English trees with different coloured stripes in their ties and house prefects appointed.

6.4 Gaining Control – ‘The Disappeared’

Commentators have highlighted how some schools use exclusions as a way of disposing of problematic students whilst at the same time improving their exam performance and asserting a strong sense of moral values by bolstering their disciplinary profile (Ball 2008, Beckett 2007). Northtown Academy initially used fixed term exclusions as a way of ‘gaining control’. Its first Ofsted Report in 2008 refers to this phase of development when it states that

‘exclusions have been cut substantially from previous high levels’ (Ofsted 2008).

The introductory paragraph to the Academy’s Launch Prospectus referred to ‘a school with religious character based on principles of care, tolerance, discipline and hard work’. However the language was much more hard edged in the school’s first Self Evaluation Form in which it referred to the urgent need to address the substantial minority of students whose behaviour it described as ‘feral’. A strong stance on discipline was reflected in a new concentration on establishing an ‘ethos’ in the school. Students who were not responding to the new rules were identified and given fixed term exclusions or placed in full or part-time units either on site or offsite. By the end of 2007 there had been no official permanent exclusions from Northtown Academy.

Whilst the Academy’s reluctance to permanently exclude any student was admirable, the fact that it operated alternative structures for vulnerable students impacted on parents’ rights in terms of exclusion. This is exemplified by the case of one student from the Academy which resulted in a High Court action. A thirteen year old boy was sent home from classes at the Academy after it was alleged that he had assaulted a member of staff. However, his family did not receive confirmation from the school as to the status of the exclusion as temporary (up to fifteen days) or permanent.

His mother is quoted as saying:

‘I was told the Academy didn’t want him back but officially he hadn’t been excluded. He was left in legal limbo for months on end. They expected me to go away and find G a different school but their actions deprived me of the right to appeal’ (Sheffield Star 2007).

In September 2007 his mother began legal action. The case went to the High Court in April 2008 and finally resulted in the boy being permanently excluded from the school. His mother was then able to appeal against that decision before an independent appeals panel. The case was held in August 2008 and ruled in the family’s favour and when the case was investigated it was

ruled that fifteen days exclusion would have been appropriate. The Academy met the family's legal costs with the panel expressing concern about the Academy's policy of informal exclusions. Officials from the DfES committed to meet with representatives from the sponsor after the panel found that the exclusion was in breach of other guidelines. The Specialist Education lawyer representing the family estimated that the cost of the case to the Academy was £25,000. The parent claimed 'I know of other students who have been unlawfully excluded and who are attending school for only an hour each day'. She then referred to the fact that the Academy had recently been praised by Ofsted for reducing the number of exclusions that year. 'If G's lost time had been included in the records, that figure would have increased by at least 150 days' (Sheffield Star 2008).

A second case was highlighted in the same newspaper article which referred to a group of parents who claimed that their children had been removed from the school's roll because of their poor school attendance. The article was headlined 'Academy kicks out truants' and reported the findings of an enquiry by the Local Education Authority into claims that seventeen pupils had been removed from the school's roll without permission from the LEA. The school had retained the per capita money it received for those students but the Local Education Authority had effectively been left to sort out the problem of finding educational places for these children. The Chief Executive of the Trust promised to launch an enquiry but defended their actions by blaming the predecessor school.

'When we opened, we inherited a school with a very poor attendance record and student data that appeared to bear little relation to what was happening on the ground' (Sheffield Star 2008).

Whatever was happening in the Academy, the number of students had certainly reduced. The overall roll of the school had fallen from 1162 in July 2006 (Headteacher's Report to Governors Summer 2006) to 965 in June 2008 (Ofsted 2008). It is not possible to obtain information on the reasons for this reduction since academy schools are not covered by the Freedom of Information Act. However, by checking the predecessor school's data for one

year group against the information made public in the school league tables, it is possible to at least look closely at the changes in one year group over a short period of time.

When Northtown Comprehensive School closed in July 2006, there were 223 students on roll in Year 10 who transferred over into the Year 11 of the Academy in September. No students in that year group requested a transfer to another school for September. However, in the league tables published for the Academy's first exam cohort, who took GCSE exams in summer 2007, only 204 students are listed as being on roll when the DfES were informed of the year group size in January 2007. Nineteen students had gone somewhere between September and December 2006. This impacted on all results in a positive way. Whilst NorthtownComprehensive had predicted that the cohort would achieve 29% GCSE passes at 5 A*-C grades and 19% GCSE passes at 5 A*-C including English and Maths, the Academy exceeded these predictions. The figures published were 31% and 22% respectively and were quoted as evidence of early success for the Academy. However, it was not the same cohort of children who were being examined. (GCSE performance tables 2007, Ofsted Report 2008).

6.5 The Sponsors

'Many sponsors are what we call hero entrepreneurs who embody the key values of New Labour, particularly the possibilities of meritocracy, of achieving individual success from modest beginnings and wealth creation from innovative ideas and knowledge . . . 'responsible capitalists' espousing new values, 'putting something back' into the community' (Ball SJ 2008 P186).

However, academy sponsors do not have to have any educational experience and to date have included football clubs, banks, paint, carpet and electrical retailers, a holiday firm, a Duke, a water company, a hospital trust, an airport and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Sellafield Limited. However our own sponsor was already experienced in the education field.

Of the two hundred and three academies opened by July 2010, 23% were religious in character. Twenty academies were Church of England schools, two were Roman Catholic and twenty five were broadly Christian. Northtown Academy's Parent Trust was an educational charity specially created to found academies. Its parent organisation is a Church of England Trust which runs 10 private fee paying schools with over 7000 pupils. It has a board of up to 20 members, 10 of whom are appointed by the parent trust. At the time it sponsored Northtown its Chairman was a former Archbishop of Canterbury. He has since retired and been replaced by an ex Master of Marlborough College who was educated at Oxford and taught at Harrow School. He is on the Board of the Independent Schools Council and founded the Boarding Education Alliance. He was appointed to the Board of the QCA in 2002 where he protested about 'bizarre' A Level results and alleged that the QCA had pressured exam boards to reduce grade boundaries for A Level students (Guardian 23/9/2002).

In 2006, the Deputy Chair of the Parent Trust was a Right Honourable Dame and a former senior Conservative politician. She was a former Deputy Chair of the Conservative Party and a staunch supporter of Thatcherism and monetarism. She was involved in writing 'No Turning Back' and was crucial in the formulation of the group bearing that name within the Parliamentary Conservative Party. She promoted the idea of education vouchers, was in favour of student loans and as Minister of State for Education she fought to protect the remaining grammar schools and was a strong advocate of City Technology Colleges (Ridley 1991).

The Chief Executive of the Academy section of the Trust is an ex Marlborough College man and was educated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where his tutor later became Archbishop of Canterbury. He is a former businessman, who ran his family owned export company and was named in the 'cash for honours' scandal. He was exonerated in the subsequent inquiry when it was revealed that his knighthood awarded in 2007 had been for

services to the Church of England rather than to education, and that the recommendation had come not from Downing Street but from the former Archbishop of Canterbury who was then Chair of the Parent Trust (Guardian 2006).

The Trust itself does not have funds for sponsoring academies. Instead it has committed itself to seeking individual sponsors who share its values and to recruiting individual sponsors who might be interested in helping the trust to pursue its educational aims.

The individual sponsor of Northtown Academy is a London based Iranian businessman who left Iran at the time of the 1979 revolution. He is Muslim and leads a foundation which bears his name and promotes inter-religious relations in the UK and internationally. It has a particular focus on improving co-operation between Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities. It does not have a publicly expressed educational philosophy which could be located in any of its literature. It is registered as a UK charity which covers the categories of general charitable purposes, education and training, medical/health/sickness, religious activities and arts/culture. Its total income and expenditure for 2009/10 was listed as £0.03m.

In 2006 the sponsor was made a Knight Commander of the Royal Order of St Francis which is dedicated to inter-faith and inter-church dialogue. It is descended from the Royal Order of Francis I of Two Sicilies which was founded in 1829 as a reward for civil and military merit. Whereas other such orders were strictly Catholic, this order was a civil form of such a knighthood. Amongst the orders, other prominent members are the two previous Archbishops of Canterbury, the Deputy Chair of the Parent Trust Board and Baroness Thatcher.

In July 2006 the sponsor attended the turf cutting ceremony at Northtown Academy and the ceremony is reported and photographed on the website of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St George, to which the Order of St Francis is affiliated. This Order is actively involved in 'the defence and

promotion of the Roman Catholic religion' (Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St George 2006). The next section of this chapter refers to the involvement of Father Michael Seed and a PR executive in the development of Northtown Academy. Father Seed is also a member of the Constantinian Order of St George whilst the PR Executive holds the rank of Knight Commander of Merit with Star of the Constantinian Order and Knight Commander of the Royal Order of St Francis and is the Order's Great Britain and Ireland delegate (Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St George 2006).

Whilst such interconnections are understandable given the political and religious affiliations their members share, what is of concern is that it has proved very difficult to find any explicit reference to the educational aims and values of the individuals concerned. In previous chapters the philosophical, educational and philanthropic ideas of the key policy makers were a matter of public record. In this case some of the most influential players are neither political nor public figures and their views on education are either not known or are expressed in a few key phrases. Yet despite this they have the power to control the curriculum of Northtown Academy and to play a key role in its governance.

In 2007 the sponsor was revealed as the Labour Party's second largest sponsor, donating £830,000. He had made his first donation only one day after becoming a permissible donor by joining the electoral register for the local and European elections at which he was eligible to vote.

6.6 The Role of the Public Relations Executive

In 2000 Father Michael Seed was one of England's most high profile Catholic priests. Since 1998 he had held the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs at Westminster Cathedral and had assisted MPs Ann Widdecombe and John

Gummer as well as the Duchess of Kent to convert to the Catholic faith. He had also celebrated mass for the Blair family in Downing Street prior to Tony Blair's conversion to Catholicism in 2007. In 2000 Pope John Paul had awarded him the Cross of Honour for his religious work. In 2011 Father Seed was subject to an investigation by the Daily Mail which resulted in the newspaper claiming that he had solicited charity donations in exchange for Papal Knighthoods. He admitted living in a flat owned by a corporate money lender who had received a Papal Knighthood for his charity donations, and was accused of cultivating an Israeli arms dealer seeking business opportunities in the Balkans in a series of emails. When it was put to him that he was facilitating arms deals he is quoted as saying 'I can't deny that, it's terrible.' (Daily Mail 2011)

Father Seed was influential in the push for faith involvement in the Academy Programme and in his book 'Sinners and Saints' describes the scene in 2002 when two senior Downing Street officials met a leading public relations executive at the St Ermin's Hotel in London. The executive is referred to in this study as AB. The officials asked the AB if he would use his skills to enlist individuals willing to sponsor the Academy Schools Programme (Seed 2009). AB is described by Seed as 'the consummate go-between, the peerless broker, a friend of many European Royals and half of the Saudi Inner Royal Family' (Seed 2009 p98).

AB is an internationally influential figure who has helped to raise millions of pounds for Catholic causes and has a Papal Knighthood for his services to the Church. He was still a member of the Board of Directors of the Parent Trust of Northtown Academy in 2010 and claimed that he introduced the Trust and Downing Street to the Academy's sponsor.

'Over the last five years I have brought Mr K into contact with the Labour Party at different levels . . . He's deeply committed to improving education standards in the UK' (Observer 2007).
'He has since claimed to have raised more than £8 million for the Academy Schools Programme' (Daily Mail 2010).

AB became an influential figure in government circles and in 2007 was described by the Observer as 'one of the most influential men you have never heard of' (Observer 2007). In May 2006 he was appointed Chief Policy Adviser to the Foreign Policy Centre, an international think tank launched under the patronage of Tony Blair in 1998 'to develop a vision of a fair and rule-based world order' (Foreign Policy Centre 2010). In July 2007 he was made Chair of Labour's Faith Task Force which focussed on identifying the common values of different faiths and traditions. He was at this time also Chairman of the Ancient Constantinian Order of St George, the International Roman Catholic Dynastic Order of Knighthood with close links to the Vatican, and was its British and Irish delegate. In December 2008 he was awarded the OBE in recognition of his services to 'inter-faith relations and to charity' (Independent Catholic News 2008). During this period he was also serving on the Board of Governors of Northtown Academy. In 2007 announced AB married a great-granddaughter of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. One of the celebrants of the Mass was Father Michael Seed.

In March 2005, it emerged that a £500,000 donation AB had made to the Labour party had been rejected by its chief fundraiser, Lord Levy, who allegedly feared the money had come from foreign businessmen. AB insisted the money was his own and issued legal proceedings against those who claimed it came from overseas. AB's PR Company, Eligo International, counts the Syrian government as well as Saudi royalty among its clients. He also helped arrange the first royal wedding at the Vatican for 400 years when Lord Nicholas Windsor married there in 2006. He claims to have raised more than £8m for Labour's Academy Schools Programme.

In an article in the Daily Telegraph in which he is referred to as a friend of Prince Charles, AB says:

"Michael Seed introduced me to Number 10 officials, who asked if I would assist in educational issues by helping to raise money. I wanted to find individuals who could provide that help. There were a lot of people who were clearly concerned about improving education."
(Daily Telegraph 2007).

He and the sponsor were both present at the school for the official opening by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, in May 2009, where Mr Brown praised the achievements of the sponsors.

‘The school motto here is ‘The Best in Everyone’ and there is no better . . . your motto sums up the goal here’ (Yorkshire Post 2009).

However, neither was present for the Ofsted Inspection six days later which placed the school in a category of Notice to Improve. In the Section entitled ‘Overall effectiveness of the school’, Inspectors state:

‘Governors, although supportive of the Academy, have not held it to account well enough and, until recently, were unaware of the scale and gravity of some weaknesses’. Ofsted recommended that ‘the school should develop the quality of governance’ (Ofsted 2009).

6.7 Ofsted Judges Progress

The first monitoring visit to the Academy took place in June 2008 by which time the Academy was 18 months old and had moved into new buildings in February that year. The report was extremely positive about the school’s ethos, referring to the fact that many students behave well and concluding that ‘behaviour is undoubtedly much better than it was’. The emphasis on establishing ethos and taking control was recognised by the Inspection Team. ‘Students are very clear that the Academy is a safer and more enjoyable place to be, especially since moving into the new buildings’. The improvement on the situation in the predecessor school is summed up in the final paragraph of the report:

‘Such a transformation in ethos is attributable to successful leadership and management’.

However, it does contain a caveat about continuing to refer back to the shortcomings of Northtown Comprehensive.

‘The Executive Director . . . is under no illusion about what remains to be done. A key ingredient in this will be to raise expectations of what is possible, starting from a precise evaluation of the current position, rather than trying to gauge progress from earlier times’.

It was also clear that in the next visit the school would also be judged on how effective it had been in its avowed aim to

‘raise academic standards and to ‘capitalise on the improved ethos to build students’ independence as learners’ (Ofsted 2008).

The school underwent a full Section 5 Inspection in May 2009. Section 5 Inspections were introduced under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 and were designed to judge the school against its own self assessment. This report again spoke positively about the school’s ethos.

‘The Academy faced profound challenges when it first opened, but subsequently transformed the climate for learning, in particular with regard to students’ personal development and well being’.

However, other aspects of the report were much less positive, referring to ‘significant failings at a strategic level.’ Over the last year there has been a loss of impetus stemming from a lack of strategic leadership and the failure to focus on tackling key weaknesses’. Whilst students’ personal development was ‘satisfactory’, teaching and learning were deemed ‘inadequate’. In a reversal of the previous inspection, students of the predecessor school’s Key Stage 3, now in Key Stage 4, were judged as showing ‘promise’, whilst the intake of the Academy in Key Stage 3 were making insufficient progress compared to their Key Stage 2 attainment. Students’ contribution to their local community was described as ‘limited’ and they lacked the opportunities and skills to work independently.

In the Section on inclusion, it commented that the school was running a ‘virtual academy’ to meet the needs of the ‘vulnerable and disaffected’, through home schooling and flexible timetables. Leadership and

management were criticised as 'lacking a unified sense of purpose'. Governance was criticised and the sponsor is briefly referred to 'The sponsors have very recently taken appropriate measures to support the Academy'. The Academy was issued with a 'Notice to Improve' which meant that 12 months after the notice they were examined again against their key areas of weakness. 'Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement in Key Stage 3, the development of students' basic skills, the quality of teaching and strategic leadership' (Ofsted 2009). Neither the Chair of Governors (Northtown's Master Cutler) nor the Executive Director were present for the Ofsted visit. The former has since been replaced as Chair of Governors and the latter was on sick leave. He left the Academy at the end of the academic year 2008-09.

6.8 The Sponsor's Response

The sponsor seconded three additional senior staff to the Academy on a part-time basis from another Academy. The Deputy Chief Executive of the sponsor's Northern Section was to offer strategic support and the governing body was restructured to more reflect local interests who could hold the Academy to account (Sponsors website 2009). The Academy was judged to be making satisfactory progress at its monitoring visit in January 2010 and was removed from Notice to Improve after a further Ofsted inspection in September 2010. (Ofsted 2010)

In November 2009 the Labour Government announced that the Parent Trust would not be allowed to expand further until its existing schools improved. By this time three of its London Academies were at the bottom of the league tables for GCSE success and one of its northern academies had failed its Ofsted and been placed in Special Measures. The letter to the sponsors from the Schools Secretary, Ed Balls, praised their efforts saying that they had 'been bold and courageous in taking on some of the most challenging predecessor schools in the country' but added 'there is some way to go before alls academies are making consistent progress. As a result, two of Academies are currently in Ofsted categories'. It was asked to concentrate on its existing projects and on developing the two new

academies it was due to open in September 2010. Mary Bousted, General Secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, summed up the situation succinctly:

‘The idea that a private sponsor provider will automatically solve deep-rooted generational problems in a school serving a poor area is simply untrue’ (Guardian 2009).

Postscript

A general election was held in May 2010. The Conservative Government won the largest number of seats but was unable to form a majority government and formed a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. Michael Gove was appointed Secretary of State for Education. In the Queen’s speech on 25 May 2010 it was announced that legislation would be introduced ‘to give more schools academy status and give them greater freedom over curriculum’. The Academies Bill received Royal Assent on 27 July 2010. The subsequent Act provided for primary and special school, as well as secondary schools, to become academies. Schools that had been deemed ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted were to be fast-tracked by September 2010. Their approval would be automatic and the local education authority had no right of veto. All schools in the country were sent letters inviting them to become academies. Outstanding schools no longer required the support of a sponsor (Academies Act 2010). Once the decision to become an academy had been made, the Secretary of State could order immediate closure of the existing school enabling it to open overnight as an academy. The decision to become an academy could now be made by the headteacher and governors alone with no requirement to consult its local community. The Chairman of the Parent Trust of Northtown Academy was invited to talks with the new Secretary of State for Education. After the talks he stated:

‘We have every expectation of being involved in the future of the programme. What’s clear is that we see eye to eye with the new Secretary of State’ (Independent 5.8.10).

In October 2010 the Evangelical Christian sponsor originally rejected in 2002 as a potential sponsor of Northtown Academy, announced that he was stepping down from running the four academies he had sponsored. The four schools were to join the seventeen being run by the Parent Trust of Northtown Academy. In handing over the academies, he explained his reasons:

‘The ethos of the two organisations is closely aligned. The values which we hold so dear and which have been a key moral and spiritual focus behind the success of our schools will be welcomed by an organisation that equally appreciates them and lives by them.’

6.10 Conclusions

This case study sought to illustrate aspects of the Labour Government's Academy Schools Programme by examining the impact of that policy on one school community in the north of England. It examined the historical context of the predecessor school, the quest for academy status and the way that the Academy subsequently developed with a very different vision to the one planned. It described how emblems of the grammar school were adopted, leadership imported from a high achieving school, and how blazers, house systems and prefects were made central to its ethos. It examined who the public and private key players were in the process and what their attitudes might be towards the education of the urban poor in the 21st Century. It examined how the educational philosophies of the Parent Trust are in the public domain but how the sponsors and procurers of sponsors often remain out of view and are not held to account by parliament or public scrutiny but rather are only held to account by press leaks and investigations. Even though I worked at a senior level in Northtown Academy and was present for the turf cutting ceremony, I was unaware of the involvement at governor level of the PR consultant until the research for this thesis.

The chapter ended by examining the role of academies in the new coalition government and the continuity of the role of the Parent Trust in the delivery of the new style of academy being planned. It also illustrated the missed

opportunity for radicalising working class inner city education by continuing to offer the community it serves with the bronze and iron part of a tripartite education system. It painted a picture of sponsors and trusts that have a mission to work in the inner cities but move in circles as far removed from Northtown Academy as any nineteenth century philanthropist was from the schools they supported.

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this thesis was to explore the Academy Schools Programme introduced by the Labour Government in 2000.

The study examined the philosophies of the Academy Schools Programme 2000- 2010 and the academies it produced and traced their roots in a much longer history of the English educational tradition. In pursuing this aim the thesis has sought to address several specific research questions.

The first question concerned how state secondary education got to where it is today and was answered in Chapter 2 by showing how state education of the working class emerged in the 19th Century in response to a need to manage the new urban poor. Industrialisation had produced a massive population shift to the cities and also produced social and political shifts which were perceived as a threat to the social order. Then, as now, there were fears about crime, juvenile delinquency, the breakdown of the family and a lack of morality. Education began to be recognised as an issue in which the state and church needed to take an interest. Until the 1870s elementary schooling of the working class was mainly in the hands of voluntary organisations and the churches with the state's role being a supplementary one. Faith schools remain a significant factor in English education today and sponsors with

religious associations were the largest sector of sponsors of the Blair Academies.

19th Century, secondary education reflected and supported class differences and developed to meet the needs of the 'new middle class' industrialists, managers and professionals. 'The hereditary curse of English education has been its organisation along the lines of social class' (Tawney 1931 p142). In the late 19th Century, working class education was not designed for personal growth and development but was instead 'to educate workers, servants and subjects' (Carr and Hartnett 1996 p68) and so to 'gentle the masses' for their place in society. The move to a state education system was necessary to ensure that the working class were 'educated that they might appreciate and defer to a higher cultivation when they meet it' (Lowe 1867). Historically a liberal education, which encouraged the capacity to think, deliberate, reflect and choose was the preserve of the aristocratic elite. This formed the basis of the educational model of the public schools which followed a classical curriculum and concerned themselves with 'the reproduction of the culture and the manners of the old and new upper classes' (Ball 2006 p60).

The Taunton Commission (1864-67) recommended the establishment of a national system of secondary education, separate from the public schools, matched to the needs of the new middle classes but excluding working class children who continued to receive only elementary schooling. Three separate strands developed hierarchically – the 'gold' of the private public schools, the 'silver' of fee-paying secondary education for the middle classes and the 'bronze' of State controlled elementary schools. In the elementary schools, education laid great emphasis on both moral training and skills development in order to produce a useful and compliant workforce of unskilled labour – perhaps a nation of James Dawsons, all 'skilful in his business, industrious in his calling, sober in his habits and punctual in his engagements, laborious in earning his money and prudent in the use he makes of it' (More 1829 p7). The 1870 Act was to set the scene for secondary education for the next half a century and 'was not a progressive reforming measure but rather a political rearguard action' (Ball 2006 p61).

Versions of the 19th Century tripartite model continued until the Second World War with the vast majority of working class children attending 'all age' schools until the age of fourteen, a mainly middle class group selected to attend local authority schools and an elite group of middle and upper class children attending independent grammar schools and public schools. Both my mother and father attended elementary schools in the 1930s and I was part of the first generation of my family to remain in schooling after the age of fourteen.

The 1944 Education Act, whilst reflecting the urgent need for educational change by establishing universal and free secondary education for all, continued to reflect the class based tripartite system by replicating it within the new state system of secondary education with its divisions into grammar schools, secondary modern schools and technical schools for different types of students with different perceived abilities selected by an attainment test at the age of 11.

These categories of schools were clearly hierarchical and never achieved 'parity of esteem' – the notion that they would be equal but different, instead taking their place in the continuation of gold, silver and bronze educational offerings on class lines. The Act also allowed church schools to continue either as 'controlled' or 'aided'. The latter retained control of buildings, staffing and the provision of religious instruction. Many of these aided schools later took up grant-maintained status after the 1988 Education Act.

The second research question concerned the immediate antecedents to the Academy Schools Programme and is answered in Chapter 3 which examined the post war period of secondary education from the 1950s to the election of the Labour Government in 1997. During the 1950s and 1960s a series of reports and research papers drew attention to the waste of talent and the reproduction of class differences in the existing systems. The Labour Government which was elected in 1964 required LEAs to submit plans for comprehensive reorganisation and the 1976 Education Act made this a legal requirement. However, there was no national planning for the end of the

private school system or for the replacement of the existing grammar and secondary modern schools with comprehensives and change was slow and piecemeal. Attacks on comprehensive schooling by the New Right began to gain ground before the system was even established and 'struggles over education during the 1950s to 1970s were played out on the terrain of social class laid out in the 19th Century with a series of small audiences and retreats on the side of progress and tradition' (Ball 2006 p71).

In 1979 Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party were elected to government and began its move to 'roll back the state' and reinvent a modern form of Victorian laissez faire individualism with market forces dictating the management of both the private and public sector. Parts of the welfare state were dismantled or deregulated and privatised. During the 1980s and 1990s there were a series of moves to privatise aspects of educational provision. The main platform for the realisation of its neo-liberal vision of the education system was the 1988 Education Act which saw the birth of one of the parents of Academy Schools – the development of City Technology Colleges.

The third research question concerned the leading voices driving the Academy Programme and is answered in Chapter 4 which analysed the immediate roots of the Academy Programme in the philosophies of the new Labour Government, committed as it was to private/public partnerships, inner city regeneration and the need to educate its citizens to compete in a global market. Tony Blair, with his commitment to 'Education, education, education!' invested heavily in education using Private Finance Initiatives and Building Schools for the Future, thus mobilising private/public partnerships in education. In addition, specific initiatives like Education Action Zones and Excellence in Cities were targeted at areas of social disadvantage. These initiatives formed part of the attempts by the government to tackle 'social exclusion'. There was a focus on 'standards' and 'underachievement' leading to the continued identification of 'failing schools' mainly in inner city areas and to the blaming of those schools for their 'low expectations'. This was teamed with a view of social exclusion being the result of community and family

inadequacies and a desire to end the 'flight' of the middle classes from the state education system.

For Blair and the New Labour Government the education system they wished to develop was to be a 'post comprehensive' system which needed to differentiate provision for different aptitudes within schools. A 'good' school was defined by its examination results using arguments reminiscent of those in the 1860s to promote payment by results whereby national funding for individual schools was partly dependent upon the outcome of externally validated examinations. The Labour notion of a 'good' school paid little reference to the non school factors impacting on a child's learning. Indeed 'the army of Ofsted Inspectors . . . were prepared to go on the offensive against what they regarded as the romanticism of child centred education which had had some influence over the previous three decades' (Regan 2001 p90). The problem with notions of child centred education was that they were founded on the belief that the child's gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic circumstances affected their development whilst the primary focus on the government's education policies was social cohesion rather than tackling social injustices.

The Academy Schools Programme introduced in March 2000 was a programme specifically linked to 'underperformance' and 'failure' in inner city schools working in 'difficult circumstances' with young people who were learning at sixteen 'not fit for further education and the world of work' (Blunkett 2000). Ball refers to the Academy Programme as a 'condensate of New Labour Education Policies with innovation, inclusion and regeneration tied together in an attempt to address social problems and underachievement' (Ball 2008).

The final research question asked about the impact of one academy on its local community and the issues that such a study illuminates and was answered in Chapters 5 and 6 which described in detail the impact of the opening of an Academy in a northern English city. In Northtown we sought to take this new initiative and use its offer of resources and new buildings to try

to create something radically different for our community, a community which for so long had only experienced the 'bronze' of technical schools, secondary modern schools and a 'failing' comprehensive school. We were confident as a group of staff and governors that we could 'subvert' the aims of the Academy Programme to our own educational agenda and could deliver a radically different approach to inner city education which valued the talents, strengths and abilities which the local community brought to our school. We sought to build an inclusive, comprehensive school educating its community to take its full place in a 21st Century democracy.

The weight of history was against us.

An Academy opened along very different lines with policies and codes reflecting the ethos of the sponsor and common to their chain of academies. This is common to other academy chains and has been likened to a corner shop closing and a branch of a local supermarket opening and rebranding along national rather than local branding preferences. (Beckett 2007). The emphasis was on ethos and discipline and on an orderly community. Our vision was not theirs.

However, this is not the end of the story for academies, or for the solutions that governments seek in response to the problem of how best to educate the inner city poor. In 2010, the newly elected Coalition Government quickly affirmed its commitment to the further development of the Academy Schools Programme and its extension to embrace all secondary schools. In September 2010 all secondary schools were offered Academy Status and in June 2011 the programme was expanded to primary schools when it was announced that the two hundred lowest performing primary schools were to be closed in July 2012 and to reopen as academies in partnership with more successful, local schools.

So whose voices are now dominating? Michael Gove was appointed to the post of Education Secretary in the new Coalition Government. Michael Gove was born in Edinburgh and adopted by a family in Aberdeen. He was state

educated before later attending the independent Robert Gordon's College and Oxford University where he was president of the Oxford Union. He had made his views on inner city education clear in 2008 when as Shadow Secretary for Education he made a speech to the Centre Forum think tank which has published work on the benefits of City Academies. The speech was entitled 'Widening the Gap' and the 'gap' he referred to was inequality, not reflected in the school system but being actively generated by it. 'We actually have a school system which widens the gap between the fortunate and the forgotten'. However, what was being proposed was not an attack on the elite private and public schools but an attack on the educational achievement of children on free school meals in areas of disadvantage. He laid out his vision of what successful schools for those areas should look like:

'All of these schools succeed because of two things – the fusion of two facts. They have an ethos, a culture, which is in the best sense of the word, conservative, and they have been able to embed that culture and give effect to that ethos because of structural factors which are truly liberal'.

He lists those structural factors as strict uniform, behavioural policies with respect for authority, setting, an academic curriculum of traditional subjects, no excuses for those who don't conform, an introduction to culture excellence and respect for teachers. He then listed the excellent schools in deprived areas to which he was referring, all of which are academies, and made specific reference to the academies sponsored by the Northtown sponsor. 'We should allow organisations like the chance to compete to take over our most badly failing schools now'.

He wanted philanthropists to become more centrally involved in the direct provision of education in areas of high disadvantage.

'Faced with educational failure in the past, some have understandably tried to find escape routes. They have opted for what you might call the Oliver Twist solution . . . Just as Oliver was scooped out of trouble by kindly Mr Brownlow, so the State or individual philanthropists or some other sort of charity is invited to pluck the most deserving children out of failing schools and transport them to successful ones. But for every Oliver you save, there's an Artful Dodger left behind.'
(Gove 2008).

In the Summer of 2011 serious rioting broke out in towns and cities across England causing a variety of analyses about what the causes of the riots were and who or what was to blame for them. Michael Gove's analysis was clear and he linked it to his own experiences of disadvantage.

'For all the advances we have made, and are making in education, we still allow thousands more children to join an educational underclass . . . I recognise that using a word like underclass has potentially controversial connotations. It can seem to divide society into them and us. But I believe there's merit in plain speaking. I am also haunted by the thought that I might have been one of them. I was born to a single parent, never knew my biological father and spent my first few weeks in care.' He laid out his views on poverty. 'These are young people who whatever the material circumstances that surround them, grow up in the direst poverty with a poverty of ambition, a poverty of discipline, a poverty of soul' (Gove 2011a).

The analysis remained as it has for the last century and a half with its language of the deserving and undeserving poor and an underclass threatening the moral fibre of the nation. Gove took up his theme in his speech to the Conservative Party Conference a month later. 'Our streets will only be safe when millions of individuals police themselves and make sure that they exercise self restraint, self discipline and self respect' (Gove 2011b) – a speech which would not have been out of place in the mouth of Hannah More almost two centuries earlier.

He was clear that poor schools were to blame for the riots. 'Many of those children who believed they had nothing to lose were children who had been failed by our school system'. He then described one of the images of the summer riots when the Carpet Right warehouse in Tottenham was burned down. Carpet Right was founded by Lord Harris of Peckham, founder of a chain of Academy schools, whose virtues as an entrepreneur and philanthropist Gove went on to extol. This was followed by a list of schools that the Coalition Government had 'freed' from local authority control – one thousand academies educating 1.2 million children, twenty four new Free Schools and the new University Technical Colleges dedicated to delivering

vocational education from the age of fourteen. The more things change, the more they stay the same as history repeats itself. Bernstein wrote 'education cannot compensate for society' (Bernstein 1970 p344). In 2011 the message now appears to be that if your school cannot compensate for society . . . it will become an academy.

However Academies are no more a solution now than they were in 2010. The case study Academy is now six years old and in February it received an Ofsted monitoring visit focussing on behaviour, which found that the Academy had made inadequate progress in making improvements in behaviour. It comments that

The long term improvement of the Academy has been substantially impaired by the instability in leadership since its establishment in 2006. The current Principal is the fifth person to occupy the post since September 2006.

On governance it refers to the role of the sponsor

A lack of clarity over the split in role between the sponsor and the local governing body has limited the power of the governing body to provide the appropriate level of challenge and support'. (Ofsted 2012)

Following publication of the report the Academy hit the national press when it instructed pupils to stop using slang and dialect words so that students could recognise what kind of language was acceptable. Sixth formers were to be encouraged to wear suits rather than school uniform 'to encourage a business-like approach to their work. 'The local MP criticised the approach 'Who is going to say if it is slang, dialect or accent and decide which one is right and wrong.' (Guardian 2012).

The more things change the more they stay the same.

Despite the challenges which face those fighting for a debate about the nature of English schooling, I remain optimistic that dissenting voices still matter. They matter because they challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and the supposed commonsense approaches of the Coalition Government. Throughout the history of working class education outlined here, there were voices challenging dominant ideologies. Whilst their voice may not have triumphed, they provided an important alternative picture of what might have been. In the times that lay ahead, it is important that there is a clamour of challenges to the market-driven ideologies which dominate. I hope this thesis can add a little to that clamour, for I believe it is a story worth telling.

The lesson that can be learned from the development of Northtown Academy is that its development could never be along truly inclusive lines given the historical contextualisation of secondary education for the working class over the last two hundred years. The case study Academy illustrates the market dominated contemporary ideological contexts within which it operated and given these contexts it is what the latest reform of working class state education was bound to look like. The problem is a different one to that perceived by generations of policy makers being not ethos and curricular change which is needed but political and social change to further a social justice agenda.

‘No clever arrangement of bad eggs ever made a good omelette.’ (C. S. Lewis - Author, Poet and Scholar 1898-1963)

APPENDIX 1

